Partners of Choice and Necessity: Special Operations Forces and the National Security Imperatives of Building Partner Capacity

A Monograph

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How do US special operations forces maximize their role in the foreign policy of "building partner capacity" (BPC) to support the objectives of national security strategy? Most analytical writing about partner force development focuses on the wartime advise-and-assist experience of both conventional forces (CF) and special operations forces (SOF). Few scholars have written about the nature of warfare in phase 0 or the strategic utility of special operations campaigns to develop capable and competent forces for partner nations. Fewer still have studied the comprehensive integration of SOF and CF to achieve the policy goals associated with building partner capacity. This monograph identifies gaps in the progression of history, theory, and doctrine for partner force advising and for phase 0 operations in general that contribute to differing cultural attitudes towards these mission and environments between SOF and CF. SOF are proven highly effective in building partner capacity with minimal CF integration, but only when certain criteria are present. When environments are suboptimal, there is insufficient evidence to suggest how these forces might campaign together to compliment each other's capabilities and build partner capacity more effectively.

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Abstract

Partners of Choice and Necessity: Special Operations Forces and the National Security Imperatives of Building Partner Capacity, by MAJ Stephan R. Bolton, 88 pages.

How do US special operations forces maximize their role in the foreign policy of "building partner capacity" (BPC) to support the objectives of national security strategy? Most analytical writing about partner force development focuses on the wartime advise-and-assist experience of both conventional forces (CF) and special operations forces (SOF). Few scholars have written about the nature of warfare in phase 0 or the strategic utility of special operations campaigns to develop capable and competent forces for partner nations. Fewer still have studied the comprehensive integration of SOF and CF to achieve the policy goals associated with building partner capacity. This monograph identifies gaps in the progression of history, theory, and doctrine for partner force advising and for phase 0 operations in general that contribute to differing cultural attitudes towards these mission and environments between SOF and CF. SOF are proven highly effective in building partner capacity with minimal CF integration, but only when certain criteria are present. When environments are suboptimal, there is insufficient evidence to suggest how these forces might campaign together to compliment each other's capabilities and build partner capacity more effectively.

US national security policy states that countering the global terrorist network which threatens US and allied interests requires support via an indirect approach through and with the military capacity of our partner nations. Threat groups based in weak and failed states uniformly exploit the undergoverned spaces where US partner nations lack the capacity to deny those spaces to the terrorist or insurgent. US security policy ends therefore include both defeating the terrorist network and supporting partner nation stability. The policy of building partner capacity is the way to achieve those ends, through whole-of-government actions to improve the security, development, and governance abilities of the partner nation. All services of the US military are tasked with preparing for and conducting stability operations, including the partner force development aspects of BPC. Special operations forces will find themselves involved in or leading nearly all these efforts, and must integrate with all capable and potential partners to most effectively support US strategic and policy goals.

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms

AAB	Advise and Assist Brigade
ADRP	Army Doctrinal Reference Publication
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Force
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
BPC	Build Partner Capacity
BTT	Border Transition Team
CF	Conventional Forces
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CT	Counterterrorism
CTC	Combat Training Center
DA	Direct Action
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
ESAF	El Salvador Armed Forces
ETIA	Echelon Tactique Interarmee
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FMLN	Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front
FSF	Foreign Security Forces
GCC	Geographic Combatant Command
GEF	Guidance for the Employment of Force
GOP	Government of the Philippines
GWOT	Global War on Terror

HMMWV	High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles
IDAD	Internal Defense and Development
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham
ISOF	Iraqi Special Operations Forces
IW	Irregular Warfare
JCET	Joint/Combined Exchange Training
JCISFA	Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance
JIIM	Join, Interagency, Intergovernmental, Multinational
JP	Joint Publication
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
JSOTF-P	Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines
LLDB	Luc Luong Dac Biet
LIC	Low Intensity Conflict
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
METL	Mission Essential Task List
MILGRP	Military Groups
MiTT	Military Transition Team
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MTT	Military Training Team
NA	Nation Assistance
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NMS	National Military Strategy
NSCT	National Strategy for Counterterrorism
NSS	National Security Strategy
ODA	Operational Detachment – Alpha

ODTAC	Outside the Declared Theater of Armed Conflict
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OEF-P	Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OPCON	Operational Control
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OTERA-A	Organize, Train, Equip, Rebuild/build, Advise/assist, Assess
PME	Professional Military Education
PTT	Police Transition Team
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
RAB	Regionally Aligned Brigade
RAF	Regionally Aligned Force
ROKA	Republic of Korea Army
SA	Security Assistance
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies
SC	Security Cooperation
SCG	Security Cooperation Guidance
SF	Special Forces
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SFAAT	Security Force Advise and Assist Team
SO	Special Operations
SOCPAC	Special Operations Command – Pacific
SOCSOUTH	Special Operations Command – South
SOD	Special Operations Directorate
SOF	Special Operations Forces
TAA	Train, Advise, and Assist
TACON	Tactical Control

TCP	Theater Campaign Plan
TSCP	Theater Security Cooperation Plan
TT	Transition Teams
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USG	United States Government
USPACOM	US Pacific Command
USSF	United States Special Forces
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
USSOF	United States Special Operations Forces
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UW	Unconventional Warfare
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization

ILLUSTRATIONS

Introduction

So policy converts the overwhelmingly destructive element of war into a mere instrument. It changes the terrible battlesword that a man needs both hands and his entire strength to wield, and with which he strikes home once and no more, into a light, handy rapier...

Carl von Clausewitz

The first land battles of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) occurred in the absence of major US ground forces. Instead, an indigenous militia some 15,000 strong, advised and enabled by only 130 US special operations forces (SOF) and supported by daily US air strikes, effectively engaged elements of the 40,000-man Taliban army. SOF infiltrated into Afghanistan on October 19-20th, 2001 and within days the combined air and ground campaign began to displace Taliban forces. By November 10th, the US partner forces of the Northern Alliance liberated the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, and four days later a separate wing of the Alliance unseated the Taliban from their capital, Kabul.[1] Together with other key resistance elements assisted by SOF in southern Afghanistan, these partner forces proved essential in the pursuit of US strategic ends seeking the destruction of the Taliban regime and its Al Qaeda guests.

This opening campaign of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) marked a new chapter in the strategic employment of special operations forces. The continuing story of partner-force advising throughout the GWOT and its associated campaigns portrays a renewed manifestation of SOF's direct contribution to US military strategy and foreign policy, perhaps to the greatest degree since the permanent establishment of Special Forces (SF) in 1952.[2] SOF's tactical accomplishments throughout the ensuing wars have invigorated professional and academic discourse about the strategic utility of SOF and have driven the evolution of SOF doctrine. As

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[1] Charles H. Briscoe, Richard L. Kiper, James A. Schroder, and Kalev I. Sepp, *Weapon of Choice: ARSOF in Afghanistan* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CSI Press, 2003), 93-108; Center of Military History Publication 70-83-1, *Operation Enduring Freedom: The United States Army in Afghanistan, October 2001 – March 2002* (Washington, DC: USACMH, 2006), 11-15.

[2] See Colin Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers. 1996); and Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of Special Forces* (New York: Pocket Books, 1987).

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US-led counterterrorism (CT) efforts have taken on new forms and spread to corners of the globe far from the combat zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, SOF continue to spearhead partner-force activities wherever the adversary appears, even in the backyards of otherwise-peaceful partner nations.

Strategist Colin Gray identifies two qualities that evoke the strategic utility of SOF: economy of force and expansion of strategic choice.[3] The employment of SOF in phase 0 has become the chief representation of the military instrument of national power outside of combat operations and joint activities which mark phases 1-5 (see Figure 1). SOF's phase 0 activities serve strategic and policy ends that are equally vital in peace, war, and the range of competition and conflict in between. SOF's primary function in phase 0 is to provide the military component to the national policy known as building partner capacity (BPC), a whole-of-government approach to helping weak partner nations provide for their own security. Inverting the usual wartime relationship in which SOF contribute operational effects in support of conventional forces (CF) campaigns, SOF in phase 0 are more closely linked to strategic ends than during conventional conflict, and are often more appropriately the supported effort, rather than the supporting effort. National security policy clearly establishes the importance of phase 0 BPC as the way to achieve counterterrorism ends. Effective development of partner forces within BPC demands high advisory competence of both SOF and CF. However, despite a 75-year history of partner force advising, the relevant theories, doctrines, and practices that should inform BPC remain poorly coordinated.

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[3] Colin Gray, *Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?* (Carlisle, PA: SSI Press, 1999), 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Phases of a Joint Operation Plan
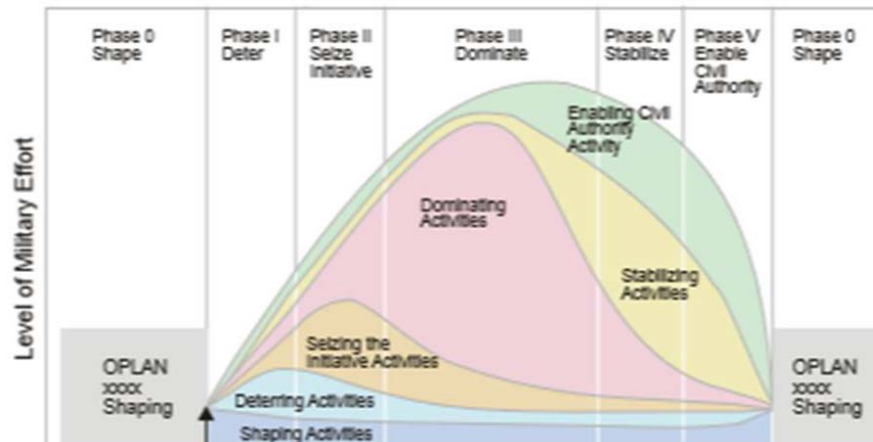
Background and relevance

The US military has a long history of excellence in training and advising partner nation forces. In the post-World War II (WWII) era, US Army Special Forces and other elements of SOF have become the premier force for training and/or advising tactical-level partner units in the context of war, low intensity conflict (LIC), or other security efforts. Through a range of capacity-building approaches which fall mostly within the realm of security force assistance (SFA, a subset of BPC), SF and the partner forces they develop provide options for US policy makers and military planners which may preclude or reduce the scale of US intervention. This makes SOF BPC a very attractive and economical option to policy makers.

The attention given to SOF's exploits in wartime have fed the perceptions of their nearly-universal application shared by the public and policy makers alike. SOF are equally as important to national policy outside of war. Unlike most of the military's ground force, SOF have been continuously deployed in non-combat roles to scores of partner nations, both in the decades before and during the GWOT. According to US Special Operations Command posture statements, SOF deployed to an average of 60-70 countries annually for the purpose of BPC activities, and SOF deploy on a variety of missions to over 100 countries annually in support of Theater Security

Cooperation Plans (TSCP). These numbers have surged in recent years as SOF presence in Iraq diminished and new versions of the terrorist threat emerged globally.[4] The most recent reporting identifies SOF conducting some manner of BPC in over 80 countries in the last year.[5]

SOF's expanding footprint is directly related to the national security goal of stabilizing those undergoverned portions of the developing world where violent extremist organizations (VEOs) are able to flourish. The US conducts BPC with almost every nation on the globe, but SOF's partnering efforts are focused on those environments where mid-to-high level terrorist groups threaten to generate transnational effects.[6] For this reason, many BPC efforts target partner nations in Africa, where VEOs have not only flourished in the last decade, they have linked together in a network connecting dozens of groups acting in at least a dozen countries. Examples of BPC in West Africa include the training of partner forces from several nations to help combat *Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb* (AQIM), such as Mali's *Echelon Tactique Interarmee* (ETIA) and the 33rd Parachute Regiment. Partner nation interoperability and regional collaboration are fostered through annual multinational exercises such as Flintlock, whose most recent participants from Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, launched a unified offensive against Boko Haram within weeks of the 2015 exercise's end.[7] Elsewhere SOF are supporting larger efforts led by conventional and European forces. An important example of this coalition approach to BPC is in the training of East and Central African partner forces contributing to the African Union

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[4] US Special Operations Command, "Posture Statement of Admiral William H. McRaven, Commander, United States Special Operations Command, Before the 113th Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee" (MacDill AFB: USSOCOM, 2014), 1.

[5] Michael M. Phillips, "New Way the U.S. Projects Power Around the Globe: Commandos," *Wall Street Journal*, April 24, 2015.

[6] Seth Jones, "Counterterrorism and the Role of SOF: Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-Proliferation, and Trade United States House of Representatives April 8, 2014" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2014), 3.

[7] Aminu Abubakar, "Chad, Niger launch ground and air offensive against Boko Haram," CNN, March 9, 2015, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/08/intl_world/boko-haram-chad-niger-offensive/index.html.

Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which combats Al Shabaab in order to restore Somalia's government. There remain many non-African examples of SOF BPC around the world, like the training and advising of Philippines Special Operations units in the context of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM – Philippines (OEF-P), and the ongoing SOF training efforts in Colombia, and there are also examples of military BPC oriented on non-Islamic threats, such as the advising of multinational forces in pursuit of Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in central Africa.[8]

Often in phase 0 or low-intensity conflict (LIC) environments, assessing capacity development is challenging, and somewhat subjective in the absence of willing enemy. Where an enemy obliges, the differences between tactical, operational, and strategic success become observable, but still remain largely qualitative and may be dependent on factors external to the advisor and partner force. Poorly chosen measures of effectiveness may mask the true state of partner capacity in all elements of national power. In the case of Vietnam, which began for the US as a phase 0 advisory effort and escalated to a massive commitment of resources, two decades of partner advising failed to identify or correct the Republic of Vietnam's strategic insufficiency until the state was lost in 1975.[9]

Most SOF BPC efforts in phase 0 are considered to be successful with respect to building access and relationships with partner nations' militaries. Assessing the actual capacity developed through BPC engagements proves more challenging. On one hand, such assessments should be contextualized to the particular partner. There ought not to be a single standard applied across partner nations, as the militaries of developing nations tend to be in different stages of institutionalization and capability. On the other hand, a partner force assessment cannot be a

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[8] Alex Spillius, "Barack Obama deploys US Special Forces to Central Africa," *The Daily Telegraph*, October 14, 2011, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/8828528/Barack-Obama-deploys-US-special-forces-to-central-Africa.html.

[9] Robert D. Ramsey III, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CSI Press, 2006), 73.

measure against an absolute. There is a need to evaluate these forces relative to some need, either an existing or potential threat or a critical capability required by the partner nation policy.

SOF advisors assess their partner forces both initially and periodically through iterative engagements. A post-war trend in "enduring" or "persistent" engagement, in which SOF elements maintain contact with select partner forces year-round, has replaced the pre-war practice of "episodic" engagement, in which SOF detachments might only train a unit in a given country for a few months each year, and often with a different unit from year to year. The enduring engagement model has proven more successful, as has the model of training and advising a dedicated "partner force of choice."[10] Yet the recent record of partner forces developed by SF shows mixed results at both the tactical and strategic levels. Some partnering efforts have combined a tactically competent and accomplished partner force with effective operational employment and integration into strategic aims. Other efforts have produced tactically effective forces whose strategic contributions were hindered by institutional factors such as a mismatch between US and partner government policy objectives or an institutional inability to manage the partner force in accordance with its capabilities. And in a handful of partnering efforts, often involving militaries with severe resource shortfalls and weak institutionalization, partner forces have occasionally been found unequal to the tactical responsibilities given them. Perhaps the starkest example of this occurred in 2012 when Mali's ETIA units evaporated in the face of attacks by Tuareg separatists and Islamic extremists, despite the ETIA's multi-year training relationship with SF.

Research Objective

This monograph asks how SOF may improve the linkage between their current BPC operational approaches and achieving strategic ends. Three supporting questions provide the areas of inquiry: first, "are existing theories and doctrines of special operations (SO) and partner force

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[10] Simon Powelson, *Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No: Lessons for SOF from Mali* (Monterrey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2013), 5.

advising sufficient for effective BPC practice?"; second, "what constitutes a 'partner force of choice' for SOF?"; and third, "how may SOF partner with or leverage the commitment of assets by conventional forces to achieve the desired state of BPC?"

Because the focus of this monograph lies with SOF and their partner forces, there are three key assumptions which serve as starting points for analysis. The first of these is the widely held belief that SOF are the ideal force for conducting BPC missions.[11] A second assumption, which is a function of the first, is that, when all other variables are controlled, SOF BPC activities will produce a partner force that is tactically superior relative to an identified threat. A third assumption is that the policy and strategic ends of the partner nation government and defense organization are sufficiently aligned with those of the US such that the SOF partner force is likely to be employed primarily in support of those mutual ends. If these assumptions are shown to be valid, then the military component of a given BPC effort ought to prove successful. However, when military BPC fails to meet the needs of US security policy, these assumptions may be tested in order to seek out some of the underlying causes.

These assumptions are directly related to three key factors in a BPC campaign: the US advisor, the partner force and military, and the partner government. There are other important factors which impact the success of a military BPC effort, but which lie beyond the scope of this monograph. These are factors which may be influenced by SOF and the military, but lie outside their span of control. This monograph therefore assumes no significant changes to whole-of-government collaboration, legislated authorities, or fiscal and resource constraints as they pertain to BPC. Each of these factors plays a significant role in a complex adaptive system which influences the success of partnering operations, and a shortfall in any of them may contribute to insufficient results. Their treatment in this monograph is minimized to reflect the volume of

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[11] Thomas K. Livingston, *Building the Capacity of Partner States Through Security Force Assistance* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), Summary.

writing already devoted to them or, in some cases, their institutional location beyond the effective influence of the SOF campaigner.

Clarification of Common Usage Terms

Several terms are commonly and often interchangeably used to describe multilateral activities such as those associated with BPC. Building partner capacity, like foreign internal defense (FID) or counterinsurgency (COIN), requires a whole-of-government approach which "integrates the collaborative efforts of the departments and agencies of the US government (USG) to achieve unity of effort toward a shared goal." In the case of BPC, that goal is to improve the partner nation's capacity for self-rule within the stability sectors.[12] "Whole-of-government" is a doctrinal term that is often used synonymously with "interagency" or "interdepartmental." This monograph employs the term "whole-of-government" to describe US military participation in a unity of effort involving at least one other USG civilian entity.

Similarly, efforts that include non-US participants (other than the BPC recipient) are called by several names in official documents, including the acronym JIIM (Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational), unified action, and most recently, "comprehensive approach."[13] This last term is close to the joint doctrinal term "unified action." This monograph employs the term "unified action," which "synchronizes, coordinates, and/or integrates the activities of one or more US services, departments, or agencies with one or more multinational, intergovernmental, or nongovernmental partners to achieve unity of effort," to describe unity of effort involving both US and non-US participants.[14]

Scope and Organization

This monograph targets an audience beyond the SOF practitioner to include conventional force (CF), joint, and whole-of-government partners and policy makers, who conduct or influence

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[12] Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-07, *Stability*, 1-4.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, II-7.

BPC activities. Some points of discussion may seem self-evident to those with prior experience in BPC, yet there is value in establishing a top-down understanding of the importance and practice of BPC. During a recent panel discussion between students at the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) and a visiting flag officer, a student remarked that he had not fully understood the process and relevance of security cooperation until engaging the subject at SAMS – despite his prior assignment to a Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) where he was involved in Theater Security Cooperation Plan (TSCP) development.[15] It is to the benefit of all BPC practitioners to improve their understanding of the purpose and intent of BPC at all levels of policy and practice.

For the more specific aim of answering the research questions, the scope is narrowly defined by several criteria. The first is the nature of the BPC effort with respect to the partner nation. A recent RAND study identifies three rationales for US engagement with partner nations via BPC: relationship building, securing access, and/or developing effective capacity. These objectives are often used in combination, but this monograph examines only those efforts focused on partner capacity development. [16] The second criterion is that of a phase 0 environment in which an identified adversary poses a threat to both US and partner nation interests. Third is the conduct of BPC by SOF ground tactical elements with land forces of the partner nation. SOF are represented in this monograph primarily by US Army Special Forces (SF), which are US Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM) largest and primary resource for conducting the train, advise, and assist missions. The Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations components of Army special operations forces (ARSOF) also contribute to partner capacity development, especially as critical enablers to partner force operations. Additionally, both Marine Special Operations

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[15] The author participated in an informal panel with Rear Admiral John W. Smith, Commandant of the Joint Forces Staff School at the National Defense University, at the School of Advanced Military Studies on March 27th, 2015.

[16] Christopher Paul, *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity, and Under What Conditions?* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2013), xiv.

Command and Naval Special Warfare Command contribute units to train, advise, and assist partner forces in phase 0 in a manner similar to SF.

The monograph is organized from the holistic to the particular in order to appreciate the nesting of purpose of SOF BPC campaigns within policy and strategic ends. Part two serves as a cursory primer for the organizational structure and terminology of programs and missions associated with defense BPC efforts, such as security assistance (SA), security cooperation (SC), security force assistance (SFA), and foreign internal defense (FID). It also examines the origin and importance of BPC within US national security policy.

Part three follows the model of history – theory – doctrine employed at the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) to examine the evolution of operational art and campaigning. It considers lessons learned from the history of military advising, and determines the relevance to BPC of existing theories and doctrines for SOF and CF partner force advising. The purpose is to determine if there is a sufficient historical and theoretical foundation for the modern practice of BPC, or if further adaptation of current practice might yet be necessary.

The fourth section explores the nature of warfare in phase 0, the blurring of distinctions between COIN and counterterrorism, and the necessary conditions for SOF and their partner forces to translate tactical success into strategic effect in these environments. These include the characteristics of the threat and the partner forces, the alignment of policy between the US and partner nation, and the commitment of resources by the USG. A case study of OEF-P illustrates how these factors interact under positive conditions to enable successful warfare through and with a partner force against a common threat from 2002-2015. In this example, US SOF supported Armed Forces of the Philippines operations against insurgent groups and at the same time supported the rapid expansion of the Philippines Army Special Operations Command. Part five offers conclusions and recommendations for BPC campaign planning and practice.

Building Partner Capacity and National Security Policy

If war is "not merely an act of policy, but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse carried on with other means" then the employment of the nation's military force, whether direct, indirect, or merely implied, must be effectively nested under policy and the military strategy that follows.[17] Phase 0 environments are not considered by whole-of-government partners to be a domain of war, but historically they are home to low intensity conflicts (LIC) which must still obey the logic of a war fought for limited ends. For the SOF planner and practitioner, the translation of national policy guidance into phase 0 SOF BPC relies on a chain of stakeholders and influencers that is much more extensive than the hierarchical path of strategic – operational – tactical guidance employed in wartime.[18] By the time a SOF unit embarks on the physical act of partner development, its campaign has been influenced at every level by SOF and CF advocates, civilian policy makers and bureaucrats, and partner nation counterparts. The number of stakeholders involved, in combination with a perception of diminished risk in phase 0, increases the friction that saps unity of effort. The SOF practitioner has a need to sort through the filters and spoilers to understand the intent of BPC policy. It is therefore beneficial to identify what US security policy asks of SOF and, by extension, their partner forces.

"Building partner capacity" is firmly entrenched in US foreign policy. Called by many other names in past decades, the concept of developing a friendly nation's capacity within the domains of security, governance, and economic development has been a constant thread in US foreign policy since World War II. BPC goes beyond the unilateral interventionist arguments of national interest which underpinned the Monroe Doctrine and Teddy Roosevelt's Mahan-inspired "Big Stick" corollary to embrace, in its modern form, the multilateral spirit of Wilsonian

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[17] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87.

[18] Brian S. Petit, *Going Big by Getting Small* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press), 162-163.

liberalism.[19] From the Greek civil war of the late 1940s to the modern Global War on Terror, US security policy has increasingly addressed those LICs that impact on the national interest with programs to improve partner nation stability. This interventionist approach has expanded over the last two decades to include BPC efforts conducted by multinational coalitions, such as the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Today, US policy aligns with "the mutual interest of all the nations of the Western Hemisphere…to develop regional capacity to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat threats from non-state actors."[20]

What is BPC?

To understand the challenges facing SOF and conventional forces in designing and supporting effective BPC campaigns, it is beneficial to first address the complex system of terms and programs, and stakeholders at the policy level. BPC terminology first appeared in policy in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), though some variation of "build" + "capacity" appeared in previous strategic documents.[21] It entered doctrinal usage through the Joint Publication (JP) and Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-07, *Stability*, which introduced "building partner capacity" as the major joint force role and one of the guiding principles in promoting long-term stability.[22]

"Building partner capacity" is not a formally defined term in defense doctrine, but in colloquial use it refers to a whole-of-government or unified action (UA) approach to "enhance the ability of partners to establish security, governance, economic development, essential services, rule of law, and other critical government functions."[23] This list of objectives is beyond the

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[19] Michael McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: US Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counter-terrorism, 1940-1990* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 4.

[20] Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2014, 6.

[21] Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006, 2.

[22] JP 3-07, *Stability Operations*, C-1; ADRP 3-07, *Stability,* 1-2.

[23] ADRP 3-07, 1-8.

capability of SOF or other military actors to directly accomplish, yet BPC is often used synonymously with its military component. The prominence of those three words on the cover of the 2014 USSOCOM Factbook seems to suggest that BPC is the guiding concept, even *the* subtitle, of postwar SOF activities.[24]

Colin Gray has suggested that slavishness to definitions can distract from freedom of thought in strategy development, but it is just as likely that ambiguity is a disruptive force when implementing strategy through a collective action process such as whole-of-government action.[25] A 2013 Government Accountability Office report cited evidence of the latter, stating that, despite almost a decade of policy and strategic use of BPC terminology, widespread misunderstanding of associated terms consistently leads to inefficiency and poor integration among the commands tasked with security force assistance (SFA).[26]

SFA is itself one of those misunderstood terms. While a student at SAMS, several of my classmates expressed the view that SFA is an opposite counterpart to foreign internal defense (FID), in that SFA is oriented on partner capacity to defend against external threats, while FID enables partner forces to address internal threats. FID, which has been a core mission of SOF since its inception, is in fact a subset of SFA, which encompasses "DoD efforts to support the professionalization and the sustainable development of" and "directly increase the capacity or capability of foreign security forces and supporting institutions of host countries, as well as international and regional security organizations." The emphasis of SFA is "primarily to assist host countries to defend against internal and transnational threats to stability."[27] SOF still support

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[24] United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) *Factbook 2014*, cover.

[25] Colin Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 37.

[26] Janet A. St. Laurent, *Building Partner Capacity: Key Practices to Effectively Manage Department of Defense Efforts to Promote Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: GAO, 2013), 7.

[27] Department of Defense Instruction 5000.68, Security Force Assistance, October 27, 2010, 2.

dedicated FID, as evidenced by BPC efforts "to free and protect [a partner nation] from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security."[28] Examples of these FID efforts include multi-decade partnerships with the forces of Colombia and the Philippines. SOF also conduct similar BPC efforts to prepare partner forces in many West African nations to defend against invading non-state threats, as in the case of Mauritanian and Nigeran forces countering AQIM, or even to pursue those threats beyond the partner nation's borders, as with forces from Chad, and Niger that have pursued Boko Haram terrorists into northern Nigeria.

SFA and FID comprise very similar mission sets that are subordinate to the domain of security cooperation (SC) and intersect both with each other, and with several other military and whole-of-government BPC efforts. Security cooperation and security assistance (SA) are legislated portfolios of military assistance programs that are determined more by legal distinctions than by mission or effect. SA is a set of military programs authorized and funded by the DOS, but administered by DOD, which provide the partner nation with material, training, and other services through some means of financing. SA is therefore a subset of SC, which encompasses "all DOD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific US security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide US forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation." [29]

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[28] Joint Publication 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense*, 2010, 107.

[29] Ibid., 243.

Figure 2: Relationship of security force assistance with security cooperation, security assistance, and foreign internal defense as of 2009.

Source: FM 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance, 2009, 1-7.

The various intersections of these programs and missions suggest one cause for confusion and inefficiency in crafting these means into an effective campaign. The overlap of distinct doctrinal terms tied to program funding and authorizations cause FID and SFA to look identical in 2009 (see Figure 2). Following the revision and publication of new doctrinal references for stability operations, FID, SFA, and Army support to security cooperation, the relationships of these efforts within nation assistance (NA, analogous to BPC) are even more byzantine (see Figure 3). The intersections described by figure 3 are accurate, though the proportions are not intended to suggest actual amounts of overlap.

Figure 3: Relationships of Military Efforts Within Nation Assistance/BPC
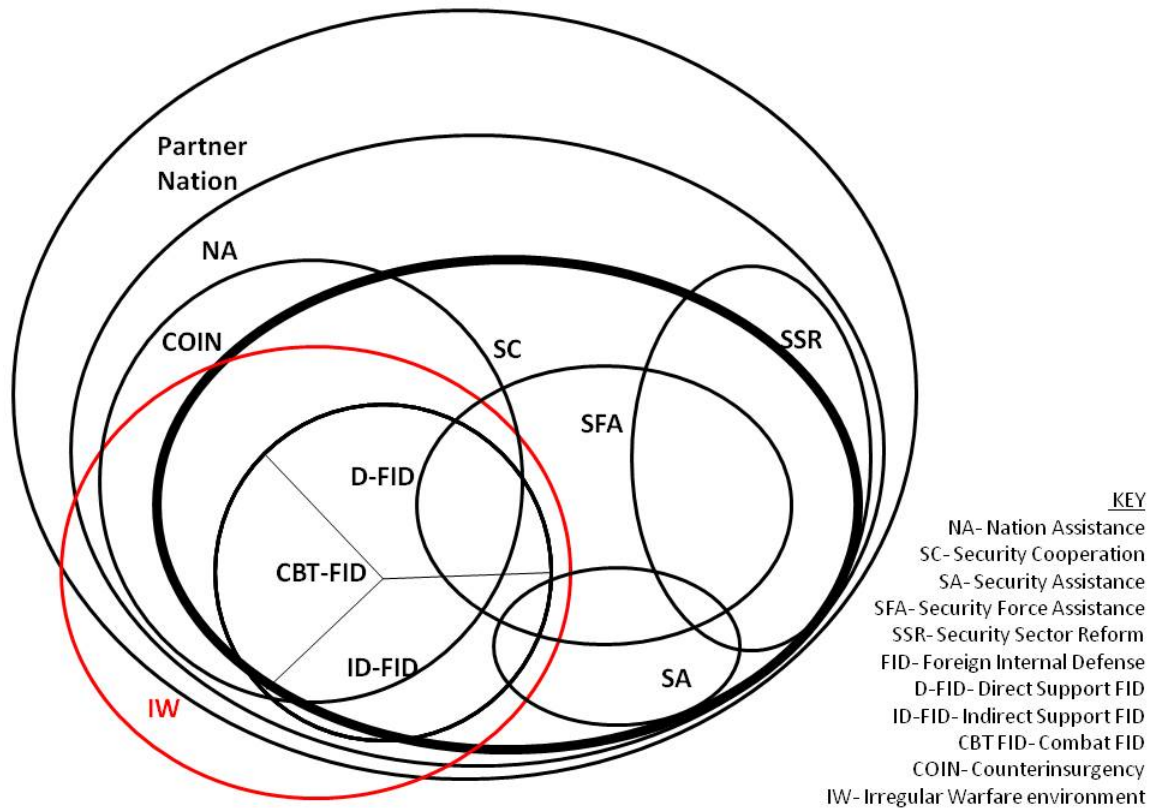
Source: Created by the author[30]

Within SFA itself, a wide variety of ends, ways, and means may contribute to BPC efforts, and not all are within SOF's purview. Meanwhile, approaches to FID have not changed significantly, and are not well coordinated with other sub-tasks of stability as they relate to partner advising.

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[30] Based on program descriptions compiled by the US Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, "Doctrinal Framework: The Doctrinal Nesting of Joint and US Army Terminology," cited in Harry R. Yarger, *Building Partner Capacity* (MacDill AFB: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2015), 74.

SOF's role in threat-oriented BPC falls mostly, but not exclusively, in the domains of SFA and FID. Of these terms, SFA is the most exclusively military, while FID describes a whole-of-government approach with a large military component, and BPC describes a policy. To avoid the need to clarify frequently between different SOF partnering missions that are distinguished mostly by the particular law or program that enables the effort, this monograph will generally employ the less accurate term "BPC" to describe the intent of SOF partnering efforts in relation to strategy and policy.

National Security Policy and BPC

National security policy guidance for the military begins with a set of four periodically updated capstone documents and is further informed by additional policy documents and addresses delivered by the President and key members of the cabinet.[31] The President's 2015 National Security Strategy (NSS) describes BPC in the context of security, economic development, and good governance, a whole-of-government triad which is mirrored in joint doctrine for stability as the three elements of a stable state, each of which demand concurrent attention.[32] The key documents which translate the NSS into defense and military guidance are the National Defense Strategy (NDS) set forth by the Secretary of Defense, the National Military Strategy (NMS) issued by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Guidance for the Employment of the Force (GEF). The Defense Department's Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) provides an important vision of how current and projected defense capabilities may support national security objectives.[33]

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[31] ADRP 3-07, 1-7.

[32] *National Security Strategy of the United States, 2015*, 10; JP 3-07, I-3.

[33] See *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014*, Washington, DC, The Pentagon, 2014.

The GEF translates the policy, strategy, and ends of the NSS and other documents into specific planning guidance for the services, geographic combatant commanders (GCC), and Department of Defense (DOD) agencies.[34] The Joint and GCC staffs further refine this guidance into plans for both contingency and steady-state activity. Where BPC is concerned, Theater Campaign Plans (TCP) and Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCP) operationalize the Secretary of Defense's Security Cooperation Guidance (SCG) for regional implementation, and in some instances support country-level plans. At every level, these military plans supporting BPC are ideally integrated, horizontally and vertically, with the corresponding plans generated by the Department of State (DOS). This integration is vital to whole-of-government success because DOS has oversight of all USG activities in a phase 0 partner nation and also holds primary legal and fiscal responsibility for a large subset of military BPC activities.[35]

The current NSS refers specifically to the importance of BPC with foreign security forces (FSF) eight times. This is many more times than in prior NSS documents. The 2012 NDS issued by then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta expands on effective partner force development through small-footprint US engagements with allies and partners in order to stabilize contentious areas. This "blueprint for the Joint Force in 2020" also acknowledges the need for BPC efficiency, stating that "U.S. forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations," and that "with reduced resources, thoughtful choices will need to be made regarding the location and frequency of [BPC] operations."[36] The anticipated NDS and NMS updates to follow the 2015 NSS will likely echo these themes.

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[34] Field Manual 3-22, *Army Support to Security Cooperation*, Washington, DC, The Pentagon, 2013, 1-3.

[35] Livingston, 5.

[36] Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2012), 6.

BPC's desired state is twofold: partner nation stability is the desired long-term effect, as described in the NSS, and disruption of transnational terrorist threats is the near-term interest. The 2014 QDR identifies counterterrorism (CT), counter-proliferation, and preventing future attacks on US and allied interests as the foundational purposes of BPC policy.[37] Enter another key security policy document, the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism (NSCT). This strategy's objective in relation to the enemy is to "disrupt, degrade, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its affiliates and adherents."[38] In outlining the global spread of Al-Qaeda's influence to underdeveloped and undergoverned regions, the NSCT also concedes that the US cannot counter "every terrorist organization that threatens our safety, security, or interests," and that successful CT obligates the US to "join with key partners and allies to share the burdens of common security."[39] The threat has since expanded to include a number of VEOs that have little or no affiliation with Al Qaeda, yet seek similar goals with similar or even more violent methods.

Counterterrorism and stability need not be linear in their relation, in that one necessarily establishes the preconditions for the other, but in fact comprise a reinforcing feedback system.[40] Multi-dimensional BPC reduces opportunities for violent extremist organizations (VEOs), and a reduction in VEO activity enable BPC efforts to deepen and broaden their roots. The stated US policy outcomes against medium- and high-threat VEOs are to disrupt, dismantle, degrade, and defeat them in order to prevent attacks against US and allied interests. A range of acceptable outcomes that achieve that end might also include containment or displacement of the threat to locations which diminish their capacity to project violence internationally or to act as a destabilizing influence in a country or region of importance. Broad CT strategy and practice are

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[37] *Quadrennial Defense Review, 2014*, 21.

[38] *National Strategy for Counterterrorism, 2011*, 8.

[39] Ibid., 6.

[40] See Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York, NY: Currency, 2006), 79.

rapidly becoming about mitigating acts and messaging related to a small set of extremist beliefs that transcend a set of terrorist organizations.

Though BPC is recently introduced terminology, US foreign and security policy have included some form of military aid and assistance continuously since WWII. Throughout the Cold War and post-Soviet eras, partner advising and counterterrorism have both been strongly associated with SOF. During the GWOT era, the concept of counterterrorism has evolved from pre-war connotations of direct action conducted by elite units to include a much broader array of military efforts and government programs. Similarly, partner force development policy, in which a SOF primacy emerged during the Reagan administration, has also evolved to call for contributions from a spectrum of conventional capabilities. While the NSS documents published by three pre-war presidents all specified the importance of SOF in relation to LIC partnership and/or counterterrorism, the current NSS does not.[41] This reflects a shift in DOD approaches to BPC that prescribes the task as a department-wide responsibility.[42] This advocacy for CF involvement echoes through many guiding documents and senior leader statements, but it remains to be seen whether CF will embrace a mission in peacetime that it has done well, but not happily, in war.[43]

From Policy to Practice

The translation of policy into strategic and operational guidance is often a frustrating process for both the policy maker and military professional. As former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Janine Davidson points out, the military planning doctrine which posits an expectation of detailed guidance and clear ends from higher authorities is at odds with the desires

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[41] *US National Security Strategy, 1988*, 23; *US National Security Strategy, 1990*, 28; *US National Security Strategy, 1994*, 7-8.

[42] See Department of Defense Instruction 3000.05, *Stability Operations*, 2009.

[43] See *Chairman's Strategic Direction to the Joint Force,* 2012; and *The Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World*, 2014.

of policy makers who would first like to have a menu of options to consider. Such options, however, must be thoroughly developed by military planners in order to be viable, and because thorough development requires clear guidance, the cycle of iterative frustration continues.[44] In the absence of clearly identifiable dominant threats to national security, the conceptual nature of policy may retain an ambiguous quality unsuitable for military planning purposes. Post-Cold War policies such as the 1994 "National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement" and more recent versions of engagement-as-strategy have led to unfocused approaches to BPC and security cooperation.[45] The linkage of BPC to counterterrorism, which is one of the chief US security objectives today, ought to provide SOF campaigners sufficient space from which to translate guidance into practical country and regional plans that support unity of effort in the pursuit of national security. More than seven decades of BPC policy and practice are available to inform the way forward.

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[44] Janine Davidson, "The Contemporary Presidency: Civil-Military Friction and Presidential Decision Making: Explaining the Broken Dialogue," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (03, 2013): 129-45.

[45] See Brian S. Petit, *Going Big by Getting Small* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, 2013).

Between Policy and Practice

The School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) employs the framework of history-theory-doctrine to examine the evolution of operational art. Operational art is the mental approach by which commanders and planners apply their knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment to design, resource, and execute campaigns comprised of linked tactical actions in pursuit of strategic and policy ends.[46] The concept behind the framework holds that the analysis of history, or any observed practice, produces or modifies a theory which seeks to explain the observed phenomenon or action; valid theories inform new doctrine which anticipates future conflict. Ideally, the doctrine is flexible enough to adapt to the unique characteristics of new conflict. After sufficient observation the "new" history leads to emergent doctrine, or perhaps a modification of theory.[47]

A Brief History of Advising

The history of SOF partnering operations is as old as SOF themselves. These are predominantly wartime histories, beginning 70 years ago as the Allied nations sought every possible advantage to set the conditions for victory over the Axis powers. The creation of many types of US special operations forces and their employment towards operational and theater-strategic effects was a key innovation of WWII.[48] US SOF effectively advised and assisted the operations of resistance and irregular forces in France, Burma, and the Philippines.[49] The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), whose chief mission was to collect intelligence, identified a critical capabilities gap in leveraging the power of indigenous forces to combat an occupying military

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[46] ADRP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, 2012, 2-4.

[47] Class discussion facilitated by Dr. G. Stephen Lauer at the School of Advanced Military Studies, Seminar 2, August 4, 2014.

[48] Stephan Bolton, *The Innovation of US Special Operations in World War II*, unpublished essay.

[49] See Isaac J. Peltier, *Surrogate Warfare: The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces*, SAMS Monograph, 2005.

that was our mutual enemy. To fill this gap, the OSS developed units under its Special Operations Directorate (SOD) for the purpose of conducting sabotage and prolonged guerilla operations in the enemy's rear area. The SOD's Jedburgh teams and the Operational Groups developed and employed the fledgling doctrine of unconventional warfare that would later become the fundamental purpose of Special Forces.

These units had to accomplish their objectives with and through surrogate forces and clandestine networks. The Army in WWII lacked historical knowledge of such activities from which to generate an effective doctrine. The new advisor force would need to learn de novo the operational techniques that they would in turn support with their partisan partners. The first OSS operators therefore became recipients of foreign training from veterans of irregular fighting in Greece, Yugoslavia or Spain.[50] Once deployed and integrated with partner forces, OSS units in occupied France operated in very small teams far from Allied support, relied on indigenous cooperation and supply, and yet were able to synchronize their operational effects with the Allied advance across Europe. OSS detachments contributed an even larger share to the Allied and Chinese successes against the Japanese in the Burma-India-China Theater.[51]

In subsequent wars, SOF continued to partner with both elite and irregular forces. In Korea, the circumstances were particularly unique. Special operations units had been disbanded at the end of WWII, so there were no standing forces available when the Eighth Army identified a capability gap in guerilla warfare.[52] North Korean forces were using it to some effect, and the US command believed it could be useful to harass communist forces and provide space for UN forces

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[50] Leroy Thompson, *De Oppresso Liber: The Illustrated History of the U.S. Army Special Forces* (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 1987).

[51] Gary M. Jones and Christopher Tone, "Unconventional Warfare: Core Purpose of Special Forces," *Special Warfare* (Summer 1999), 5, cited in Peltier, 7.

[52] Michael McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: US Guerilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism, 1940-1990* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992) 21.

and the fledgling Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) to gain experience and confidence.[53] The task of organizing and training irregulars was initially given to Lieutenant Colonel Robert Volkmann, who as an infantry officer that remained in the Philippines from 1941-45 had trained and led five regiments of Filipino irregulars against the Japanese army while US forces built strength and set conditions for the liberation of the islands.[54]

Volkmann's understanding of unconventional warfare (UW) made him ideal for the task in Korea, but his skills were rare and the lessons of the OSS were not institutionalized between the wars. When illness required Volkmann to pass the job over to less-experienced successors, the irregular forces they generated were not considered to be tactically or operationally impactful.[55] This attempt to recreate the effects of OSS efforts did highlight two key characteristics of subsequent special operations theory: that the organizations and units necessary to conduct unconventional military tasks should be permanent and in place prior to conflict, and that the Army lacked institutional understanding of the appropriate usage of special operations capabilities and UW.[56] The shortcomings of UW in Korea, in addition to the concerted effort of many WWII OSS veterans still in service, led to the establishment of the Psychological Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina in 1952, where Volkmann and OSS veterans like Colonel Aaron Bank would rejuvenate Army special warfare capabilities.[57]

US advisors were on the ground in Vietnam before the Korean War had even come to a stalemate. SF advisors formed only a small part of the overall effort led by the Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) and its later replacement, the Military Assistance

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[53] J. Paul de B. Taillon, *The Evolution of Special Forces in Counter-Terrorism: The British and American Experiences* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 87.

[54] McClintock, 83.

[55] Ibid., 21.

[56] Taillon, 88.

[57] McClintock, 39.

Command – Vietnam (MACV), which would become a four-star command by the end of the war. Throughout the war, SF soldiers became the gold standard for tactical partner advisors. They worked with conventional line units of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), but also developed the Vietnamese Special Forces, the Luc Luong Dac Biet (LLDB), which were modeled on US Special Forces. SOF efforts in Vietnam were consistently successful at the tactical levels, even when SOF and their partner forces were poorly employed, as when they were tasked with developing irregular forces to secure the Vietnamese border against incursion.[58] The path to advisor primacy was laid when SF was founded in 1952 for the purpose of conducting UW and activities associated with indigenous partner forces.[59] President Kennedy helped pave that path with his enthusiasm for counterinsurgency (COIN) and his elevation of Special Forces as a favored means. These missions made Special Forces, and subsequently other SOF elements, the only instruments of military power and national policy with a permanent responsibility to work with foreign partner forces.

This is not to suggest that conventional forces are not capable of achieving significant results in training, advising, and assisting partner forces. US armed forces have long understood the importance of such mentorship, and there are numerous examples throughout the last 70 years of partner forces excelling under CF sponsorship. Conventional forces have generated strategic effects through partner advising, but almost exclusively in wartime. Following the Allied invasion of North Africa in WWII, 500 US advisors trained eight French divisions for combat in Europe. In the Chinese theater of operations, 4,800 US advisors were assisting 30 divisions of nationalist forces, an effort which one observing general believes would have prevented the communist revolution had the mission remained after the Japanese surrender.[60] Where proto-SOF partnering

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[58] Gray, "Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Venture," 4.

[59] See Bank.

[60] Scott G. Wuestner, *Building Partner Capacity/Security Force Assistance: A New Structural Paradigm* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute Press, 2009), 4.

efforts in Korea proved ineffective at any level of war, the conventional advisory mission eventually helped build a durable army for South Korea.[61] At the height of the military assistance mission in Vietnam, more than 10,000 US advisors worked with counterparts at all levels of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, and with other security forces and local governments. Of this number, only around 1,800 were SOF, and those forces almost exclusively advised elite and irregular forces at the tactical level.[62] Yet the ARVN produced by this multi-decade, mostly conventional advisory effort could not protect its government against the North Vietnamese invasion in 1975.

The Vietnam War became the US military's bellwether for SOF and CF advisor missions in the modern era. For the Special Forces, it solidified their role as the tactical lead in FID missions. FID missions were much more prevalent in the last decades of the 20th Century than were opportunities for unconventional warfare, but due to the many advising similarities between the two missions, FID could serve as a training venue for many UW skills. For conventional forces, the advisor experience in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam should have informed foreign military assistance doctrine in the interwar period and prepared the Army for the challenges associated with generating effective militaries in Afghanistan and Iraq. Instead, the endstate in Vietnam became the dominant influence on doctrine and conventional force attitudes towards the advisor mission. As one analyst writes, "for the US military, 'no more Vietnams' meant, among other things, no more advisory efforts on the scale or of the duration of that conflict."[63]

The histories of phase 0 are thus mostly SOF histories, with mostly favorable results. In general, they may be considered to have successfully achieved their operational objectives and provided at least near-term support to strategic ends. As a point of comparison, the early years of

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[61] Robert D. Ramsey III, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth, KS, Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 24.

[62] Wuestner, 5.

[63] Ramsey, 73.

engagement in Vietnam essentially comprised a phase 0 campaign which succeeded neither at containing communist intrusion nor at preventing an expansion of the conflict which then required the large-scale commitment of conventional forces in a positive feedback cycle of sunk-cost logic and burden-shifting from Vietnamese to US forces.[64]

The history of US security policy also shows that strategic reliance on SOF in low-intensity conflict, and SOF's role as an economy-of-force effort, are not new phenomena, but have ebbed and surged with the political popularity of such efforts. Cold War containment policy fueled what might be referred to as the first era of modern irregular warfare and provided many FID opportunities. SOF partnering operations were standard components of administration security policy during the 60s and 70s, and became the preferred means during President Reagan's administration. In that era, the strategic objective of BPC, referred to in such terms as "partnership" and "security assistance," was containment of communist ideology and influence in developing nations as the US and Soviet Union (USSR) sought relative advantage over each other via client states and proxy wars. Fearing the "domino effect," in which weak states in contested areas of the globe might fall under Soviet influence in sequence, the US presented its Cold War approach to military intervention as a policy of counter-aggression. US military support to partner nation forces would come at "the invitation of a threatened, legal government to counter a projection of Soviet military – and ideological – power.[65] The policy of BPC today is similarly one of invited action, proxy conflicts, and containment of an ideology.

Two exemplary models of SOF in LIC include El Salvador (1979-1991), and Colombia (1998-2008). In the former, a US advisory force of only 55 soldiers helped the El Salvador Armed Forces (ESAF) expand to five times its size over 12 years and to fight the coalition of insurgent groups known as the Farabundo Marti National Liberation front (FMLN). No victory

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[64] Clark C. Gibson and Elinor Ostrom, *The Samaritan's Dilemma: The Political Economy of Development Aid* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 79; Senge, 1990, 393.

[65] McClintock, 24.

could be claimed by either side, but the ESAF helped set the conditions by which the FMLN guerillas gave up combat and its underground leadership openly entered into the country's political process.[66] The BPC effort can in this respect be considered a strategic success, if not a tactical one. However, institutionalization of the ESAF as a professional army- creating a change in its organizational culture and values to become a modern, professional force- did not occur.[67] This particular effect was not an essential military objective to contain the insurgent threat. Fortunately, El Salvador has remained fairly stable since the end of this conflict. In contrast, in such parts of the world as West and Central Africa, where a high incidence of civil war, coups d'état, and other forms of political violence are directly related to the nature of civil-military relations, then long-term stability becomes a function of partner force professionalism, causing the advisor to account for this objective in his campaign plan.[68]

In Colombia, a SOF-centric approach to partner force assistance in the context of a motivated partner nation in the lead, backed by strong US government commitment, accomplished more in one decade in terms of partner military combat effectiveness and institutional reform than the previous 30 years of US assistance. Plan Colombia, the campaign proposed in 1999 by the Colombian President to reduce internal conflict, led to increased US confidence and support for the partner government. Resulting changes in legal authorities for US forces and a sizeable commitment of US resources (which made Colombia the third largest recipient of US assistance from 2000-2010) enabled a number of SOF successes. Initially, SOF were able to shift advisory efforts to new, more appropriate partner forces. Later, as the competence and capability of Colombian CF became evident, more effort was devoted to building

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[66] Ramsey, 103.

[67] Ibid.

[68] See Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (New York: Harper, 2009).

capacity of Colombian SOF. Ultimately, the sheer volume of aid flowing to Colombian forces caused USSOF to expand its advisory effort vertically as well as horizontally, establishing a Special Operations Command (Forward) to advise the Colombian military at the operational and ministerial levels. As a result of this BPC effort, SOF partner forces achieved many stunning tactical effects, but more importantly they contributed directly to the strategic end of a strong and stable Colombian state.[69]

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have again brought to the forefront SOF's premiere capability to operate through and with irregular and elite forces which SOF have generated, trained, advised, and accompanied in combat. A common thread in most literature on wartime advisory missions is that SOF are not the primary effort, but instead play a supporting role by generating and partnering with elite and irregular units to complement the partner nation's conventional forces. These are forces which US conventional forces are ill-suited to train and advise, but in truth, conventional forces have sourced the majority of advise-and-assist missions in each of these wars, as they did most recently in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF and OIF, respectively).

Following the onset of the war on terror, the US military was much slower to identify the need for CF partner advising than in previous wars.[70] The decision to disband the Iraqi army and start anew drew the first intensive efforts to plan a large scale advisory mission. By 2004, rebuilt Iraqi units received training from special skills advisors and doctrine experts from multiple services.[71] Later variations on training teams included the Military, Police, and Border Transition Teams (MiTTs, PTTs, and BTTs) paired with Iraqi units; Security Force Advisory and Assistance

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[69] Petit, 120-136.

[70] "Doctrine Man" interview of Dr. John Nagl, November 3, 2014, accessed on February 20, 2015 at https://medium.com/@Doctrine_Man/learning-to-drink-beer-with-a-straw-93308b1649d6.

[71] See Ramsey, 2006.

Teams (SFAATs) conducting similar partnering activities in Afghanistan, and the Advise and Assist Brigades (AABs), which were brigade combat teams augmented with 48 advisors to partner with and enable an Iraqi Army unit sharing battlespace. The effectiveness of these organizations was mixed, but regardless of any criticism, there were no arguments that such advisory efforts were unnecessary. On the contrary, they were absolutely vital, even if limited in effect. The anecdotal frustrations with recent CF advisory efforts obscure the historical impact such advisors have had in the past, an effect which in some key ways exceeded the wartime impacts of SOF.

Theories of SOF and Special Operations Applied to BPC

There is ongoing debate about the need for and nature of SOF theories. Despite more than a dozen learned contributors to the early body of SO/SOF theory, many scholars and practitioners remain unsatisfied with the current state of theoretical development.[72] The land, sea, and air domains have long had theories which inform the doctrine of the forces responsible for them. Space and cyber theorists have just begun the search for deep understanding of these youngest domains. While advocates are quick to point out that standing special operations forces with dedicated missions are likewise a "young" phenomenon, dating only as far back as WWII, it is also fair to consider the circumstances under which dominant theories formed in other domains.

Though Clausewitz and Jomini were not the first theorists of war and land warfare, their works may be held as the most influential on modern doctrine and practice. Yet their theories were developed and refined in direct response to the military revolution of Napoleonic warfare, in which they were direct participants. Thus their earliest theoretical writings appeared in the midst

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[72] Joseph Celeski, Report of Proceedings of the Joint Special Operations University SOF-Power Workshop, MacDill Air Force Base, FL, 22-23 August 2011, 1; Christopher Marsh, James Kiras, and Patricia Blocksome, "Special Operations Research: Out of the Shadows," *Special Operations Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2015): 1-6.

of a new kind of warfare, and their more refined theories of war appeared within a few decades.[73]

Airpower first influenced the battlefield in WWI, and its two most well-known theorists, Guilio

Douhet and Billy Mitchell, had published their works by the mid 1920s.[74] Writing in the turn-of-

the-century decades, the two dominant seapower theorists, Alfred Thayer Mahan and Julian

Corbett, wrote theory not so much in response to new approaches to war, but rather to changing

political realities for the waning British empire and the expanding American dominance in the

western hemisphere.[75] Given the 70-year history of special operations forces and their direct

relation to political realities, it is none too early to push and evolve the extant theories of SOF

power towards a "critical mass."[76]

On one side of the debate are a number of proponents for a grand unified theory of SO

and SOF.[77] Others have suggested that theories are best tailored to suit the cultures that employ

SOF, citing unique characteristics or cultural attitudes that may give rise to nation-specific

theories of SOF.[78] Still others argue that special operations themselves do not require their own

body of theory as SO occur within the context of existing domains and do not rise either to a

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[73] Christopher Bassford, "Jomini and Clausewitz: Their Interaction," Paper presented to the 23rd Meeting of the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe at Georgia State University, 26 February1993, accessed July 20, 2014, http://www.clausewitz.com/readings/Bassford/Jomini/JOMINIX.htm.

[74] See David MacIsaac, "Voices From the Central Blue: The Air Power Theorists," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 624-647.

[75] See Philip A. Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Naval Historian," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 444-479.

[76] Marsh, Kiras, and Blocksome, 2015, 2.

[77] Celeski, 4; and Harry R. Yarger, *21ˢᵗ Century SOF: Toward an American Theory of Special Operations* (MacDill AFB, FL: JSOU Press, 2013), 2.

[78] Gray, "Handful of Heroes," 3; see also Alistair Finlan, *Special Forces, Strategy and the War on Terror: Warfare By Other Means.* New York: Routledge, 2007.

distinction from landpower theory nor do they lend themselves to a generalized theory.[79] Another

perspective of theory-doubting holds that the history of SO covers such an incredibly broad array

of missions and capabilities that no pure theory of SO may be feasibly devised.[80]

Fueling the advocates' side of the debate is the historical consensus regarding the

importance of theory. Stated most simply, "theories provide highly compressed insight into how

something works."[81] According to Clausewitz, a theory should "clarify concepts and ideas that

have become confused and entangled."[82] In that light, SOF theory deserves further exploration.

Clausewitz also suggested that theory is valuable only if it has "a powerful capacity to explain. It

must be able to show the relationship between the past and the present. It must not be constrained

by the temporary trends in military philosophy or technology, and it must be "sufficiently flexible

. . . [with] potential for further development." Corbett argues that without a sufficient theory, it is

impossible to fully appreciate the scope and meaning of a specific capability and its strategic

utility.[83] Most importantly for development of institutions to meet anticipated requirements, a

sound theory explains how to conduct and win war, and the conditions under which special

operations are likely to succeed.[84] Most importantly for the commander, armed with solid

theoretical knowledge, he is more sensitive to dynamic changes in the conflict environment and

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[79] Marsh, Kiras, and Blocksome, 2015, 4.

[80] Christopher Marsh, Mike Kenny, and Nathaniel Joslyn, "SO What? The Value of Scientific Inquiry and Theory Building in Special Operations Research," *Special Operations Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2015), forthcoming.

[81] SAMS Art of Design Student Text, version 2.0, 33.

[82] Milan Vego, "On Military Theory," *Joint Forces Quarterly* No. 62, July 2011 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press), 59-67.

[83] Julian Corbett, *Principles of Maritime Strategy* (New York: Dover Publications, 2004), cited in Finlan, 12.

[84] Vego, 1; William McCraven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1996), 381.

better able to adapt to them.[85] Two of the most important questions a SOF theory should answer are "How do SOF achieve strategic effect," and "How ought SOF practitioners advise policy makers and interagency partners on how SOF may protect and advance US interests?"[86]

Short of an overarching theory and justification for a SOF-power domain distinct from those established in the land, sea, air, space, and now cyber domains, the theories offered in the last three decades have sought to describe special operations in four dimensions. The first of these is direct action, composed of discrete tactical operations such as raids. Admiral William McCraven presented the first durable theory of direct action in which he describes how SOF are able to rapidly achieve a relative advantage against superior enemy positions by reducing the influence of friction for long enough to accomplish the mission. His theory, derived from case studies of several wartime raids by elite or specially selected troops, describes six principles of SO through which planners and operators mitigate friction that would otherwise prevent mission success: simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed, and purpose.[87]

The second, and more relevant, dimension describes what qualities and characteristics of SO and SOF enable the successful conduct of protracted campaigns. These may apply to partner advising in any manner of LIC environment, including unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, or security force assistance. These qualities and characteristics are not mission-specific, but rather are intended to identify what sets SOF apart and allows them to accomplish what is beyond the capacity of most conventional forces. Robert Spulak provides an example of this dimension with his "operational characteristics of SOF," in which he identifies traits generally unique to SOF and applicable in all environments.[88] These include relative superiority, certain

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[85] Vego, 1.

[86] Yarger, 3.

[87] McCraven, 2.

[88] Spulak, 23.

access, unconventional operations, integrated operations, and strategic initiative. Harry Yarger follows with a set of 26 premises and 14 principles in support of his "American theory of SOF." His principles, extrapolated from SOF experience, do not supersede the principles of war and of joint operations, but rather supplement the principles that apply to all conflict with a set that may also be applied in the conduct or evaluation of special operations. They include:

Relative superiority	Direct Action
Purpose	Understanding
Initiative	Surprise
Simplicity	Security
Risk Management	Warrior Ethos
Mobility	Integrated operations
Asymmetric operations	Preparedness[89]

Clearly there is overlap with principles that apply to all military forces. The argument that principles may apply differently to SOF is valid because the methods, tactics, and techniques of SOF express these principles differently than do conventional forces, either in single tactical actions or campaigns. The trend in the pursuit of broad special operations theory, while developing deeper understanding of how the terms contained in these holistic checklists apply to SOF, have yet to add significantly to the evolution of SOF doctrine.

Some recent efforts have evaluated SOF operations from a more practical perspective rather than a holistic one. Falling short of claiming to be theories, advocates for increased utilization of SOF have argued how their employment in a long-view, light-footprint, campaign approach to phase 0 engagement is the best means of shaping or preventing emerging threats.[90] Another example of a practical approach to understanding SOF operations in LIC is Colonel Brian Petit's study of operational art applied to phase 0 campaigns. He concludes that these campaigns, which require patience and perseverance while supporting partner force evolution

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[89] Yarger, 63-67.

[90] See Fernando Lujan, "Light Footprints: The Future of American Military Intervention" (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2013); see Linda Robinson, "The Future of US Special Operations Forces" (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2013).

over time, require modified expressions of operational art that are more suitable to a LIC environment.[91] They also demand a counterintuitive logic that says less force is better than more, rapid results should not be pursued, and it is better to allow the partner to do things poorly than for SOF to do them on the partner's behalf.[92] These studies, and the similar works of many others examining phase 0 action, create deeper understanding, in the manner of theory, about specific aspects of special operations, and may have as much value to the development of SOF and partner advising doctrine as do the attempts at unified SOF theory.

The third dimension describes the forces themselves, the particular qualities for which SOF are selected and trained. A warrior ethos, not a requirement unique to SOF, is matched with high levels of creativity and adaptability.[93] The SOF warrior must demonstrate his competencies through a range of cross-cultural interactions which test and reinforce his adaptive qualities.[94] This matters in BPC because certain among these qualities are desirable in any military advisor, SOF or CF, and those particular qualities are likely to be found among a percentage of the conventional force. Successful non-SOF partner advisors from T.E. Lawrence to John Paul Vann to many in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown their ability to "engage with populations who apply different sense-making strategies… [and] profoundly different frames of reference."[95] Going forward, if CF wish to conduct the advisor mission with the requisite high measures of performance, then it follows that a selection process to identify candidates with the relevant qualities is a non-negotiable starting point.

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[91] Petit, 138, 168.

[92] Ibid., 169.

[93] Spulak, 14-15.

[94] Jessica Glicken Turnley, *Cross-Cultural Competence and Small Groups: Why SOF Are the Way SOF Are* (MacDill AFB, FL: JSOU Press, 2011), 2.

[95] Ibid.

A fourth dimension of SOF theory, though not as well developed as the others, suggests that SO must be understood as reflections of their country's cultures and governments.[96] Colin Gray describes how the cultures and militaries of the US, UK, and Germany have since WWII viewed their SOF with a certain degree of apprehension, while France and Israel employ their SOF with great latitude. The impact of this theory may be seen in shifting attitudes of the US public and congress towards SOF. SOF are always at their most popular in times of crisis, but in times of perceived peace, the secretive employment of SOF has produced suspicion and increased oversight.[97] The Leahy Amendment, which prevents the linkage of US military assistance with partner forces suspected of human rights abuses, is a manifestation of mistrust in SOF by the people, resulting from a SOF-partner force relationship (determined by policy) that was not resonant with the values of the American people. Moving forward, without carefully shaped policy and practice in an extended interwar period, SOF's position and strategic utility may again become precarious in the political winds of Washington.

The junction of these theories might be the best place to begin distilling the components of a general theory of special operations. Several common threads stand out from the overlap: special operations and SOF exist only to accomplish what conventional forces cannot; they overcome asymmetric disadvantages by reducing fog and friction through the application of combined attributes which of themselves are not unique to SOF, but in their synergy become a distinction of SOF, in order to achieve a temporary and relative advantage over the adversary; and most importantly, special operations and SOF have a disproportionally high strategic utility relative to their size and cost. A corollary to this last point becomes evident from 70 years of special operations campaigning: SO are more directly linked to strategic ends in low-intensity

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[96] See Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers. 1996).

[97] Ibid.

conflict environments, but in high-intensity venues they are more likely to produce operational effects in support of conventional forces.

What is readily apparent from extant SO/SOF theory is that it is heavily focused on combat and wartime employment of SOF. Nearly all the body of theory is derived from studying wartime histories of special operations. This is understandable. Specific requirements in war and warfare justify the creation of SOF, as they do for all military forces. But herein lies an important gap: the overwhelming majority of SOF employment occurs outside a declared theater of armed conflict in the form of phase 0 partner advising. A tension results when theories of SOF based on war are extrapolated to cover a spectrum of phase 0 conflict that the military considers other-than-war. At present, the best way to mitigate this tension is to evaluate phase 0 activities in conflict environments as forms of warfare. Emerging thought on irregular warfare moves in this direction, but in practice, CF are generally much less interested than are SOF in such notions of non-war warfare.[98]

Doctrines of SOF and BPC

Changes to US Army special operations doctrine separate special operations into two critical capabilities: surgical strike and special warfare.[99] The former include precision short-duration activities in all global environments and phases of joint operations to achieve specific and limited objectives. Surgical strike implies the intention of direct actions to shape or influence environments and audiences in specific ways with a minimum of untoward effects. Special warfare is comprised of activities associated with long-duration partner force campaigns conducted by specially trained and educated SOF, with a special emphasis on cultural empathies and language skills.

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[98] See Department of Defense Joint Operating Concept, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats*, May 17, 2010.

[99] ADRP 3-05, *Special Operations*, 2012, 1-4.

Special warfare is broad enough to cover all types of partner force advising, including FID and SFA to a partner government and unconventional warfare (UW) support to partner forces opposing a hostile government or occupying power. FID and UW require many overlapping skills and capabilities, especially in regards to training and advising a partner force. For the purpose of BPC in a partner nation, Colonel (Retired) David Maxwell, former commander of Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines, argues that FID doctrine is the best frame of reference. He contends that FID should be the "unifying doctoral concept for employment of United States instruments of national power, both civilian and military" in the execution of counterterrorism policy.[100] He further argues that "if we accept that the war on terror is counterinsurgency on a global scale, then we also should accept that the correct way to contribute to the defeat and deterrence of terrorism is to enable friends, allies, and partners with sufficient capacity to defend their countries."[101]

Foreign internal defense doctrine published in 1981 was an adaptive response to the counterinsurgency practices of the Cold War. It declared FID as a whole-of-government responsibility, and identified clear and scalable requirements for conventional force participation in FID operations. FM 3-05.2, *Foreign Internal Defense,* currently defines FID as "the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to their security."[102] This is cognitively important in two ways: it places the US in support of partner nation's policies, and it orients the US and partner nation effort on specific threats stemming from insurgency, terrorism,

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[100] David Maxwell, "Considerations for Organizing and Preparing for Security Force Assistance Operations," *Small Wars Journal*, 3, accessed April 24, 2015, www.smallwarsjournal.com.

[101] Ibid.

[102] FM 3-05.2, *Foreign Internal Defense*, 2011, 1-1.

or crime. FID is itself an all-encompassing approach to BPC in a partner nation facing credible threats. The Department of Defense contribution to FID comes via security cooperation (SC) activities, including partner force advising. FID is a service-level responsibility, but for the Army, US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) is the proponent for FID doctrine, as is USSOCOM for the Joint community.[103]

Colonel Maxwell also notes that joint and Army doctrine for stability operations has assumed equal importance with doctrines of offense and defense. Stability doctrine provides the overarching framework for military support to BPC policy, and ties together the military tools available with the objective of deterring conflict in and emanating from weak and failing states.[104] This particular marriage of doctrine and policy makes explicit the requirement for the services to maintain forces and capabilities that contribute to security cooperation. This charge to the conventional forces to assume a larger role in partner force development has been issued by many senior military leaders, including former Secretary of Defense Gates and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[105]

As implied by the spectrum of warfare (see Figure 4), conventional forces maintain an expeditionary role outside of traditional war. Recalling from special operations theory that SOF exist only to accomplish that which CF cannot, there are partner force advising activities for which CF are well suited, especially in the training and advising of a partner nation's conventional units. There are also advising activities for which SOF are ill-suited, such as developing CF doctrine and institutions for partner nations, and advising above the tactical

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[103] ADRP 3-05, 1-2.

[104] See JP 3-07, Stability Operations, 2011, and ADRP 3-07, Stability, 2012.

[105] US Department of Defense, "Gates Calls for Building Foreign Troops Capacity," DefenseTalk online, February 26, 2010, accessed February 10, 2015, https://www.defencetalk.com/gates-calls-for-building-foreign-troops-capacity-24490/.

(brigade) level. These are all advise-and-assist activities which CF conducted in Iraq, Afghanistan, and prior wars, sometimes as organic units, training teams, or as individual advisor.

Figure 4: Spectrum of Warfare and Whole-of-Government Roles.
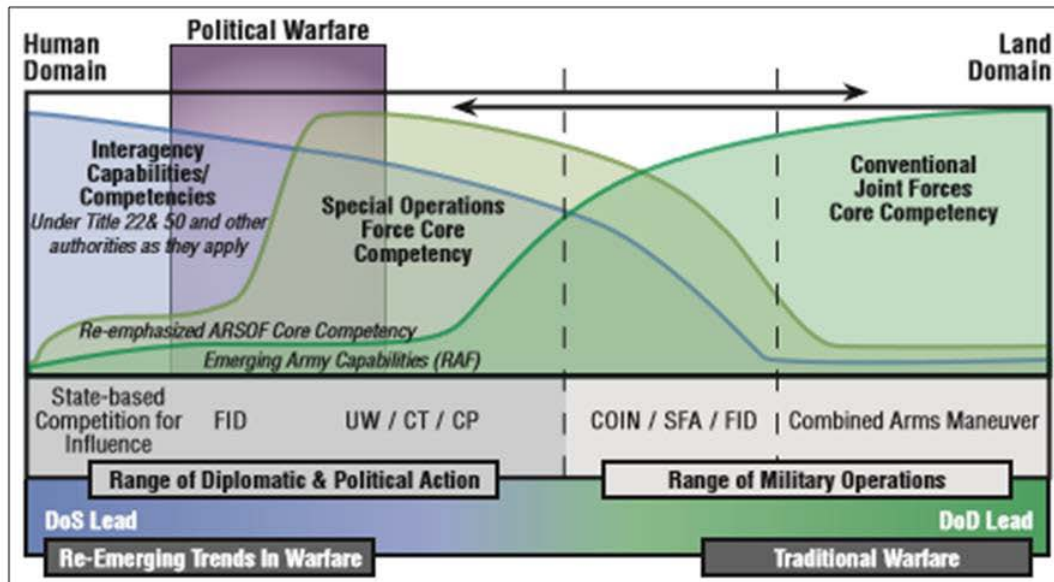
Source: US Army Special Operations Command[106]

Conventional force approaches to BPC doctrine appear to come from a different direction. FM 3-22, *Army Support to Security Cooperation*, presents a thoroughly developed doctrine for Army campaigning in support of Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCP), and is aimed at staffs from brigade and above.[107] It is a replacement for the 2009 FM 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance*, which was almost entirely focused on prescriptive doctrine for a modular brigade augmented for SFA.[108] Rather than deriving from historical and theoretical analysis, that initial SFA doctrine reflects an institutional decision made in wartime that a particular organization, the brigade combat team (BCT), would become the Army's tool for advising and assisting partner conventional forces, a mission which is alien to a BCT's nature.

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[106] *ARSOF NEXT*, *Special Warfare*, Fort Bragg: USAJFKSWCS, 2015, 7.

[107] FM 3-22, iii.

[108] See FM 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance, 2009.

FM 3-22 introduces a framework for partner force development to describe how the SFA mission is accomplished via organization, training, equipping, rebuilding, advising, and assessing (OTERA-A) at all levels of the partner nation's need, to include the strategic and ministerial.[109] The manual also borrows from FID doctrine in describing the linkages of national and partner-nation policy, Department of State direction in phase 0, and whole-of-government contribution. FM 3-22 distinguishes SFA from FID, however, by expanding the scope of SFA to include preparing partner forces to counter external threats and for coalition membership: "At operational and strategic levels, both foreign internal defense and security force assistance focus on preparing FSF to combat lawlessness, subversion, insurgency, terrorism, and other internal threats to their security; however, security force assistance also prepares foreign security forces (FSF) to defend against external threats and to perform as part of an international force."[110] In the entire manual, discussion of FID is relegated to four paragraphs.[111] The subject of SOF integration into SFA receives just six.[112] Whether the manual intends to be an expansion of or a departure from FID doctrine is unclear, but the message is not: conventional forces do SFA, not FID.

It is easy to cite institutional causes for the space between the CF and SOF doctrines which anticipate essentially the same mission set. The links between the institutions and doctrine are themselves a source of confusion. For joint forces, USSOCOM is the proponent for FID and for SFA, but not for stability or security cooperation. Within the Army, the Combined Arms Center is the proponent for stability and SFA, but USASOC is the proponent for FID. The nesting of Army and Joint SFA doctrines, the former written by CF and the latter currently being written under SOF direction, may therefore be challenging.

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[109] FM 3-22, 4-3 - 4-13.

[110] Ibid., 1-11.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., 3-13.

Beyond these institutional causes are those generated by differences in organizational culture. Evidence suggests a lack of interest or awareness by CF in SOF doctrine. CF has little reason to engage with SOF doctrine. At the 2014 Annual Symposium of the Special Operations Research Association, during a round table discussion on SOF campaign planning, a member of the audience raised the point that for many CF soldiers, their knowledge of SOF doctrine is mostly, if not entirely, based on their operational encounters with SOF.[113] If CF don't have an institutional awareness of doctrines that originate within SOF but may also apply to CF missions, then it is not surprising when new overlapping doctrines are generated. Maxwell again makes the point that before reinventing practices, institutions ought to "look at existing doctrine, training and organizations, and determine what is appropriate to sustain and what is appropriate for adaptation."[114] That existing FID doctrine may be fully suited to the BPC needs of the Army might go completely unnoticed among CF planners and leaders. A SOF practitioner writes that "because FID is associated with SOF most non-SOF personnel neglect reading or employing it and because it is a military concept it is also not read by the interagency community."[115]

If FM 3-22 were energetically applied by CF conducting SFA, it is difficult to imagine that US partner nations would not effectively eliminate or press into latency their more credible threats over a period of years. But CF have not fully embraced the phase 0 SFA mission, or their role as the Regionally Aligned Force (RAF). Poor attitudes towards SFA missions are further compounded by the confused prioritization of missions for the RAF. These brigades, which must now select and prepare at least a portion of their force with the language, cultural knowledge, and

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[113] Patricia Blocksome, Christopher Marsh, and Robert Tomlinson, "Report on the 2014 Special Operations Research Association Symposium," *CTX Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, May 2015, accessed April 21, 2015, https://globalecco.org/report-on-the-2014-special-operations-research-association-symposium.

[114] Maxwell, 1.

[115] Ibid., 6.

advisor education, might instead prioritize their training to suit a combined arms mission essential task list (METL) and to meet the requirements for global contingency deployments.

Historical examples of wartime advising support the integration of CF and SOF and clearly show they may complement each other's BPC roles. They accomplish this by building and advising those partner forces most aligned with their own capabilities. Thus, in Iraq, various training teams and organizations comprised of CF units and individuals executed the OTERA-A process with Iraq's newly-formed conventional forces, which allowed SOF to train, advise, and assist Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) and other elite military and police units.[116] This picture of effective and integrated advising resonates with the theoretical principle that SOF should not do the tasks that CF are capable of doing. The combined efforts of US advisors sought to transfer that same principle to the Iraqi army by improving its conventional capacity to the degree that an ISOF capacity was warranted for tasks beyond CF capacity. Such an integrated approach by US SOF and CF ought to be sustainable in key partner nations with critical phase 0 conflicts, even in accordance with the light-footprint concept. This is challenged by the continuing tensions between CF and SOF, including their differing attitudes towards what constitutes warfare.

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[116] David M. Wood, *Advising Host Nations and Host Nation Security Forces: The United States Military Advisory Efforts Through 2020*, Fort Leavenworth: SAMS, 2014, 11.

Between Peace and War

"The United States deliberately uses the word 'war' to describe our relentless campaign against al-Qaʻida. However, this Administration has made it clear that we are not at war with the tactic of terrorism or the religion of Islam. We are at war with a specific organization—al-Qaʻida."

2011 National Counterterrorism Strategy[117]

Historian John Lynn, writing in the preface to *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture*, describes a difference between the reality of war and discourse carried on about war in society. He suggests that different cultures perceive war in ways that modify its true nature to fit that culture's conception of war.[118] What constitutes war in one country or among one people may not be war to another. Different cultures and identity groups – even within the same nation – may have distinct perceptions of war. Lynn uses distinctions of class, gender, and civil-military to suggest contrasting perspectives that may make a homogenous understanding of war difficult within a single society. Subcultures may create even more divergence of understanding. Within the US military, the subcultures of special operations forces and combined arms forces have very different appreciations of war based on where their utility is best applied.

Lynn further argues that when the nature of war diverges too far from a culture's acceptable versions of war, the culture may impose limits on practices in an effort to force the conduct of war into something culturally acceptable. On a large scale, the Laws of Land Warfare and the Geneva Conventions are examples of proscriptions against acts of war that most cultures find unacceptable. At a scale more germane to this monograph, the SOF and CF cultures within the military have very different valuations of any conflict short of high-intensity war.

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[117] National Strategy for Counterterrorism, 2011 (Washington DC: The White House, 2011), 2.

[118] John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003), xx-xxi.

The Cognitive Challenge of Phase 0 Warfare

The quote taken from the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism (NSCT) is indicative of the tensions at play between the culture of government which forms policy and guides military action, and the reality of conflict in the world. It declares we are at war, and with a specific organization. Expanding the target set to include Al Qaeda affiliates and adherents, gives some flexibility, but in the four years since this policy was delivered, there have been numerous extremist groups that have broken ties with Al Qaeda, or whose affiliation may be initially unclear. Realistically, the list of groups that may pose a risk to US interests is broader than Al Qaeda, a reality that should be reflected in the next NSCT. Conversely, and just as realistically, being "at war" with an enemy need not indicate the application of warfare, at least not directly.

The strategic utility of special operations in low intensity conflicts leads SOF to appreciate many forms of warfare that bring the environment and SOF into harmony. Often, these forms of warfare do not resonate especially well with conventional forces, whole-of-government partners, policy makers, or the American public. "Warfare" preceded by doctrinally accepted adjectives like "unconventional" and "irregular" are as likely to provoke negative reactions as they are interest among conventional soldiers. Far more challenging are notions of "political" and "surrogate" warfare. Conventional forces are less likely to perceive conflicts employing these methods as "real" wars, especially where US forces are not involved in the fighting.

Defense responsibilities in phase 0, what the defense community refers to as the shaping phase, are oversimplified in the graphic representation of joint operation plan phasing. But the accompanying doctrine acknowledges that phase 0 is the locus in which the military instrument of national power, through continuous engagement and influence, deters and dissuades potential adversaries and sets conditions for decisive action.[119] The Army Capstone Concept still charges

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[119] JP 3-0, V-8.

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the military professional to fight and win the nation's wars, but now also to "prevent" and "shape" potential conflict environments before they give rise to wars or export violence. These two tasks clearly identify a landpower obligation outside of traditional warfare.[120]

The Clausewitzian concept of war's relation to policy is that war is a separate and distinct form of engagement, but is a continuation of political engagement with the use or threat of force to compel an adversary to one's will. The spectrum of conflict is gradual between peaceful competition an conventional conflict. The implication or use of force may also be gradually applied, linking low-intensity conflict arenas with policies of force. This area of policy occupies what Linda Robinson and her RAND research team have called "the missing middle," the domain of campaigns that occupy the gap between major combat operations and precision strike options. These campaigns tend to follow FID or UW models with six common characteristics: they are aimed at stabilizing or destabilizing a regime; partner forces provide the main effort; the US footprint is very small, or is not even within the target country (consider the current training of Syrian opposition forces in Jordan and Turkey); they are planned for the long war and effects are measured over years; they are inherently dependent on whole-of-government support or direction; and they must have influence on the attitudes of populations and stakeholders at multiple levels.[121]

Another way in which modern low intensity conflict has blurred definitions is in regards to the method of the adversary. From the latter decades of the Cold War until the 9/11 attacks, military professionals and policy makers held separate and largely unequal appreciations for insurgencies and terrorism. Between the Kennedy presidency and the fall of the Soviet Union, the US government considered the revolutionary movements underwritten by communist

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[120] US Department of the Army, TRADOC Pam 525-3-0, "The U.S. Army Capstone Concept." Training and Doctrine Command, Ft. Eustis, VA, 2012.

[121] Karen de Young, "Syrian fighters to begin training in Turkey despite divide over mission," *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2015; Dan Madden and Linda Robinson, *Special Warfare: The Missing Middle in U.S. Coercive Options* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2014), 2.

governments to be a much greater threat than terrorist organizations. Revolutionary insurgencies were portrayed as a threat to the regimes of US client states and to regional, or even global, balances of power. The containment strategy proposed by George Kennan in 1947 drove these proxy contests for 40 years, and the US waged such contests through UW or COIN and FID, depending on our relationship to the host government.

The age of modern terrorism emerged in the 1970s and reached its critical mass with the 9/11 attacks. The terrorism of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, or Europe's Red Brigade and the Red Army Faction were defined not by their campaigns in pursuit of regime change but by their discrete acts of criminal violence often impacting non-combatants. The public and policy response in the 1980s and 1990s portrayed the belief that specific acts of terrorism which targeted the United States deserved equally pinpoint responses. Unlike the nation's willingness to spend blood and treasure fighting insurgents, the nation and its leaders were unconvinced that counterterrorism warranted any loss of American servicemen.[122]

Today's terrorism, the near-term focus of our national security policy, is in practice much more like an insurgency. The people and institutions of the US know Al Qaeda as a terrorist organization because of the method by which Al Qaeda has interacted with our personal and collective interests. Yet Al Qaeda and many of its adherents are interested in achieving limited or large-scale political objectives, principally the creation of states or autonomous regions where they may govern through their interpretation of shari'a law. These groups employ terror tactics in their spectacular attacks, but are also practicing methods of revolutionary and unconventional warfare. The global terrorist network has actively promoted the diffusion of these methods among these caliphate-seeking extremist groups. Tactical practices may be easily observed "leaping" from one group and region to another, like the spread of improvised explosives technology, but campaign approaches are also disseminated between the groups. A former leader of Al Qaeda in

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[122] Neil C. Livingstone, "Terrorism: Conspiracy, Myth, and Reality," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 22:1, Winter/Spring 1998, 5.

the Arabian Peninsula formulated and distributed doctrine to this effect with *A Practical Course for Guerilla War.*[123]

Several of these VEOs, which SOF and their partner forces have recently fought or continue to engage, are waging long-term campaigns for terrain and control of populations. This is one reason why Dr. John Nagl has referred to the current era as the "golden age of insurgency and counterinsurgency."[124] This combination of methods is not a new approach. Techniques of terrorism have nearly always been a component of rebellion. A prime example in recent history is Algeria's National Liberation Front which waged a revolutionary insurgency from 1954-1962, employing terrorist tactics against government personnel and civilians alike.[125] But this is not the concept of terrorism held by the American people in the late 20th Century.

A short list of Al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist groups that have declared goals of statehood or autonomous regions include the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS), Al Shabaab in Somalia, Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in West Africa, and the Abu Sayaaf Group in the Philippines. Their campaigns might even be viewed through the lens of a Maoist model: the recently defeated AQIM has reverted to a latent form of insurgency (Mao's phase 1) while employing "traditional" terrorist attacks against soft urban targets; Boko Haram is waging guerilla warfare (Mao's phase 2) on a scale sufficient to bring the forces of four different countries against it; and ISIS has waged a large-scale war of movement across much of northern Syria and Iraq.[126] The shifting degrees of mobilization demonstrated by these individual extremist

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[123] See Norman Cigar, *Al-Qaida's Doctrine for Insurgency* (Washington DC, Potomac Books, 2009).

[124] Doctrine Man interview of Dr. John Nagl.

[125] See Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace* (New York: New York Review of Books, 1977).

[126] "Mali Bar Attack Kills Five in Bamako," BBC News, March 7, 2015, accessed online March 8, 2015 at http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31775679; Aminu Abubakar, "Chad, Niger launch ground and air offensive against Boko Haram," CNN News, March 9, 2015,

campaigns within a loosely networked global movement is also resonant with Mao's principle

that the phases of a revolutionary movement are not linear, but may expand, contract, or coexist

based on the context of the environment.[127]

Partner Forces of Choice: Right Partner, Right Location, Right Capability (R3)[128]

OTERA-A is a doctrinal construct that conceptually addresses the range of security force

assistance ways to achieve military and policy ends (see Figure 5). It describes the tasks of

organizing, training, equipping (and sometimes arming), *rebuilding* (or building de novo),

advising and assisting, and *assessing* partner forces. An additional dimension of partner advising

is *accompanying.* This is especially important in wartime or in combat FID environments, where

the legitimacy of the advisor may be damaged if he does not accompany the partner for on

combat missions. This menu of options applies to all advisory efforts across the spectrum of

conflict.

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accessed online March 9, 2015 at http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/08/intl_world/boko-haram-chad-niger-offensive/index.html.

[127] See Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College).

[128] ADRP 3-05, 3-11.

Figure 5: Programs, tasks, missions, and purposes within SFA.
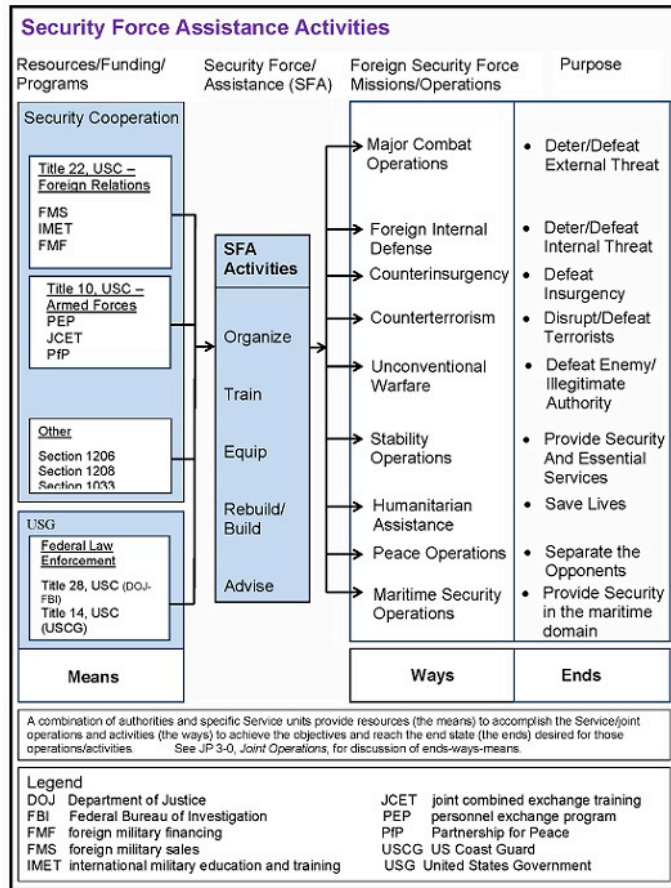
Source: Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA)[129]

The model of right partner, right location, and right capability is a cognitive model that seeks the best alignment of US objectives and advisors with existing or potential capacities of the partner military.[130] R3 practices begin with assessment of, continuous planning for, and advising of partner forces that are best suited for supporting the policy and strategic ends at country, theater, and national levels. R3 is SOF-specific doctrine, but may be the most beneficial approach in a wide range of partner development efforts.

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[129] JCISFA website, accessed March 12, 2015, https://jcisfa.jcs.mil/Public/about/WhatIsSFA.aspx.

[130] ADRP 3-05, 3-11.

"Right partner" indicates the SOF intent to "work with or through indigenous partners who are best able to advance U.S. strategic objectives and can directly or indirectly support the CCDR's regional plans." Such partnerships rely on high levels of trust between the partner and advisor, and common cause to attain mutually beneficial results. "Right location" establishes the relevance of both the training and operational areas for the advisors and partner forces. Right location is defined in relation to both the threat and the influenced populations, and also determines in part the selection and preparation of SOF forces to maximize their cultural expertise and political situational awareness. "Right capability" describes partners which possess the necessary or potential capabilities required to meet the operational goals. During the assessment phase, capability gaps are identified and necessary solutions are "tailored to address the partner's specific requirements and not exceed the partner's abilities. A well-designed program ensures that the partner possesses sufficient capability to support U.S. efforts, can use the capability appropriately, and can sustain that capability after U.S. forces depart."[131]

US SOF ideally desire advisory relationships with partner nation SOF, in order to further develop their high-end capabilities. This is a best use of SOF, but not an exclusive use. SOF have demonstrated throughout their history that they can fill the necessary capability gap through and with conventional, law enforcement, or irregular forces. However, non-military or weakly institutionalized militaries that lack the capacity to absorb and sustain the partner force will find the acquired capability and the unit's capacity to produce desired effects short-lived. These instances are not the best use of SOF where a long-term partner capacity is a desired strategic outcome.

This model is a "best practices" approach, but is still contingent on external factors for success. R3 may be insufficient due to opposing influences at one or more levels. At the seam of the tactical and operational levels, the partner force must demonstrate the absorptive capacity to

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[131] Ibid., 3-12.

retain, sustain, and employ the new capabilities received through BPC.[132] At the junction of operational and strategic levels, the alignment of policy goals between the US and partner governments plays an important role in sustaining partner nation commitment to the effort.[133] And at the strategic and policy levels, the prioritization of the conflict by the US government tends to be directly related to commitment of sufficient resources and unity in the whole-of-government effort. The impact of these factors can be observed, both in their practice and absence, in partner force development campaigns conducted as part of the GWOT.

Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines (OEF-P): Success in the Long War

Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States opened a ready-made "second front" in the Global War on Terror in the Philippines, where US interests and renewed influence were tied directly to the terrorist threat and indirectly to regional stability and balance of power. A SOF assessment team conferred with the Philippines government and military even before SOF and the Northern Alliance had joined combat with the Taliban in Afghanistan. That American citizens had been kidnapped and that Filipino terrorists had aided in the export of spectacular attacks was sufficient reason to intervene at an operational level. The Philippines' strategic importance to the US government was directly related to their position on the South China Sea, making the Manila government a desired partner in balancing China's growing regional influence. This was perhaps a more significant cause to reinvigorate an American-Filipino relationship that had languished since the closing of US military bases on Luzon, Subic Bay, and Clark Airfield in the early 1990s.[134]

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[132] Paul, et al., 88.

[133] Ibid., 87.

[134] Richard Swain, *Case Study: Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Counterinsurgency Center, 2010), 5.

The Philippines have been called something of a "war lab" by many authors.[135] Underlying tensions between the Muslim minority and Christian majority date to the 1500s, when Spanish conquerors claimed sovereignty where Muslim tribes already lived. The narrative of intermittent conflict has been linked to this master cleavage ever since.[136] The geography of the nation, with over 7,000 islands, many covered with thick jungles and mountainous interiors, makes it difficult to govern and secure, and creates undergoverned spaces and ideal conditions for terrorist safe havens. Even on the capital Manila's home island of Luzon, inaccessible areas have supported the New People's Army, a communist insurgent group, since the 1960s.[137]

Modern Muslim insurgent groups project from the southern islands, where significant neglect by the Government of the Philippines (GOP) are evidenced by poorly developed infrastructure, reduced life expectancy, and a GDP that is little more than half the national average. This reduction of government legitimacy, catalyzed by a dictatorial regime in the 1970s, helped create the conditions for the birth of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) on the island of Mindanao. Fighting between the MNLF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has been intermittent ever since, with cycles of violence interspersed with peace agreements in the nature of most intractable conflicts between identity groups.[138]

As is likely to occur when separatist groups have different internal motivations, the MNLF began to fragment after it entered into peace negotiations with the Government of the

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[135] Eliza Griswold, "Waging Peace in the Philippines," *Smithsonian*, December 2006, accessed March 29, 2015, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/waging-peace-in-the-philippines-139354699/?no-ist.

[136] Max Boot and Richard Bennet, "Treading Softly in the Philippines," *The Weekly Standard*, January 5 2009, 27.

[137] Ibid.

[138] See Louis Kriesberg, *Constructive Conflicts: From Escalation to Resolution* (3rd Edition) (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); and Daniel Bar-Tal, *Intractable conflicts: Psychological Foundations and Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Philippines (GOP).[139] The first offshoot to pick up the fight for a separate Muslim state was the

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), formed by MNLF veterans of the Mujahedin war against

the Soviets in Afghanistan.[140] And in 1991, the most extreme of these terrorist groups, the Al-

Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), formed with the help of funding from the bin Laden

family.[141] Early links to the Indonesian terrorist that attacked Bali in 2002, and with 9/11 planner

Ramzi Yousef, placed the salafist ASG on the US terrorist group list by 1997, and interest

increased further following ASG's kidnapping of American citizens in early 2001.[142]

Tracing this lineage is important in demonstrating one of the difficulties of translating US

security policy into effective counterterrorism campaigning. ASG, due to its direct Al Qaeda

connection, was the chief reason for the US counterterrorism-via-BPC mission in the Philippines.

SOF trainers and US enablers were not permitted to target or support operations against the

MNLF or MILF, both because they were not the designated enemy and because of the delicate

negotiations process between the GOP and those groups. However, the linkage between these

groups allowed safe passage and a degree of protection for ASG members and leaders as the

SOF-enabled AFP operations began to displace and disrupt the ASG in the early 2000s.[143] The

distinctions of what organizations qualify as terrorist groups, and which ones constitute threats to

US interests, are valuable for legal and policy purposes, and for the flexibility they may provide

policy makers. But they may also have the counterintuitive effect of constraining US and partner

military action against threat groups which might exploit such categorizations.

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[139] Boot and Bennet, 23; see also Kristin M. Bakke, Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, and Lee J. M. Seymour, "A Plague of Initials: Fragmentation, Cohesion, and Infighting in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics*, June 2012, Vol. 10, No. 2, 265-283.

[140] Swain, 9.

[141] Maxwell, 22.

[142] Boot and Bennet, 23.

[143] Ibid.

This dilemma impacted SOF operations to some degree in the middle years of the BPC mission, but impetus for OEF-P was the destruction of ASG. Plans for expanded SOF advising to the AFP existed prior to the 9/11 attacks, and were quickly emplaced afterwards. A survey team assessed partner force requirements in October, 2001, and an intelligence fusion cell quickly followed. The initial JSOTF (originally structured as Joint Task Force 510) mission in 2002 was to "conduct unconventional warfare operations in the Southern Philippines through, by and with the Armed Forces of the Philippines to assist the Government of the Philippines in the destruction of terrorist organizations and the separation of the population from the terrorist organizations."[144] This mission statement is remarkable first, for its cognitive recognition that this phase 0 campaign was about warfare, and second, for its application of UW against a non-state actor within the sovereign territory of a partner nation. Though this was not combat FID, and US advisors were never permitted to accompany operations below the company level, this demonstrates a particular mindset and unified perception of this environment that helped integrate the campaign.

US forces under the Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P) numbered approximately 600 at their highest point during the operation, a very light footprint considering the number of forces committed in Iraq and Afghanistan, but sizable considering most other FID-type missions.[145] The JSOTF's desired end-state was an AFP that could locate and destroy the ASG in its sanctuary and improved GOP legitimacy.[146] In addition to supporting and coordinating with the US Country Team, JSOTF-P supervised the SOF BPC mission and several enablers that supported civic action and development, and a vital information operations capability. While SOF advisors were training AFP units, these enabling efforts engaged the population to create the desired separation of the terrorists from the people.

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[144] Swain, 18.

[145] Ibid., 6.

[146] David S. Maxwell, "Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines: What Would Sun Tzu Say?" *Military Review*, May-June 2004, 21.

A critical component of this bilateral effort was the quality of the AFP prior to the engagement. Philippines conventional forces were considered to be competent and capable, and the AFP already had varieties of SOF based on US Special Forces and Rangers. US SOF advised and assisted a number of conventional units, to include army and marine infantry battalions, and JTF-510 was matched with the AFP 1st Infantry Division. These units demonstrated tactical competence in their earliest missions against ASG, allowing US detachments to concurrently build Filipino SOF capacity. As a result, the size of AFP SOF nearly tripled in the first decade of OEF-P.

US stakeholders practiced whole-of-government integration from the very beginning of the intervention and continued it throughout. As the mission progressed, US civil engagement grew to match military partnership, and both were carefully orchestrated by the US Ambassador with the support of US Pacific Command (USPACOM) and Special Operations Command – Pacific (SOCPAC) leaders. [147] The US Agency for International Development played a significant role in the effort, supporting the legitimacy and development lines of effort with $100 million in development projects on Mindanao.[148]

Unity of effort with the partner nation and its forces was as vital for success as whole-of-government synchronization. This began at the policy level, with a jointly-declared common cause against terrorism between the US and Philippines governments. Subsequent treaties codified bilateral cooperation and GOP permission for the advise-and-assist mission, and the Bush administration delivered $100 million in military assistance, along with $4.6 billion in economic and development assistance.[149] These were small amounts compared with US

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[147] Swain, 2-3.

[148] Boot and Bennet, 26.

[149] Swain, 16.

expenditures in our Iraq and Afghanistan "wars," but demonstrated significant resolve in a phase 0 conflict.

One of the best outcomes of this effort is the intangible result of SOF modeling and mentoring a partner force. Attitudes and practices among PAF SOF and other units have shifted to appreciate long-term, low-kinetic approaches that employ force with precision based on vigorously pursued intelligence. Similarly, the GOP practices, to the extent it can, the whole-of-government philosophy. This approach has demonstrably helped to preserve government legitimacy, isolate the insurgents, and prevent them from winning popular support. [150]

The progress resulting from holistic BPC was reflected in subsequent changes to the JSOTF mission statement, which by 2006 read "JSOTF-P, in coordination with the country team, builds capacity and strengthens the Republic of the Philippines' security forces to defeat selected terrorist organizations in order to protect US and Filipino citizens and interests from terrorist attack while preserving Philippine sovereignty."[151] With ASG activity largely curtailed, JSOTF-P deactivated in the Spring of 2015 on the assessment that AFP tactical capacity was sufficient to address remaining insurgent threats. A smaller footprint will sustain the enduring engagement, however, to provide counterterrorism advice and help the AFP and GOP sustain their relative advantage.[152]

Building partner capacity to mitigate low intensity conflicts is a national policy that demands the practice of a certain dialect of warfare and the mindset to match.[153] Though

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[150] Boot and Bennet, 27; Barry Stentiford, "OEF-Philippines History," unpublished draft.

[151] Swain, 23.

[152] Sam Lagrone, "U.S. Officially Ends Special Operations Task Force in the Philippines, Some Advisors May Remain" US Naval Institute News, February 27, 2015, accessed online March 10, 2015, http://news.usni.org/2015/02/27/u-s-officially-ends-special-operations-task-force-in-the-philippines-some-advisors-may-remain.

[153] Several authors have expanded on Clausewitz's distinction between the objective and subjective qualities of war, describing its immutable nature vs. its evolving character, or characterizing war's "logic" vs. warfare's "grammar." Though the grammar of a language

campaign objectives and use of military power in these environments are comparatively limited and often heavily constrained by the same policy that requires them, they may bear just as much importance to US national security as traditional dialects of warfare. US efforts in phase 0 are more likely to be successful when all the "tribes" and stakeholders have similar perceptions of the conflict and give it similar importance. Unity of effort is thus achieved between the US government and partner nation, between the US military and its whole-of-government partners, and between the military elements themselves. This unity falters when the conflict is not shown to be a priority through credible commitment and direction of resources. Within that reality, the differing perceptions cannot be united, and stakeholders will tend to pursue their own best interests. In the Philippines, matching perceptions enabled SOF to help build a successful model grounded on FID doctrine, nurtured by unified action, and resonant with the context of the particular conflict, all with minimal expenditure of blood and treasure. In Mali, divergent perceptions and low prioritization hampered unity of effort, and though SOF were able to generate significant improvements in partner capacity in just two years of enduring engagement, the gains made could not have hoped to overcome the FAMA's operational inability to respond, or the government's resulting loss of legitimacy, when war erupted on the frontier.

evolves over time, and changes may be practically observed at the time of their evolution, there is only one accepted "grammar" in the pure form of most languages. Dialects, however, proliferate. Dialect, rather than grammar, is used here to characterize the variations in form of warfare.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This monograph seeks a deeper understanding of the build partner capacity mission in phase 0 to enable SOF planners and practitioners to better link their tactical-level advisory efforts with strategic and policy objectives. SOF's BPC goals at the tactical level are the incremental improvement of partner force capabilities to defeat or otherwise mitigate internal threats, and eventually to do so on their own with minimal US support. At the operational level, the goal is to create an institutional capacity within the partner military and government to properly employ and sustain the tactical capability. This can be sub-stratified to include regional and theater counterterrorism by several partner forces in combination with each other and US assistance. At the strategic level, the goal is essentially to disrupt and contain the globally-networked terrorist threat with a network of country and regional partner forces that share our mutually supporting policy objectives.

Three supporting questions contributed to improved understanding of SOF BPC efforts. The first of these employed the history-theory-doctrine framework to ask whether theories and doctrines for partner force advising are sufficiently developed to support effective BPC, by both SOF and the conventional force, which recently has been given a more significant role in phase 0 partner development. History supports the combined effort of both SOF and CF in war to generate and employ partner forces that contribute to the operational and strategic objectives of the war. However, since the Vietnam War, CF have eschewed significant roles in phase 0 partner force development, leaving policy-makers to rely most heavily on SOF to support the strategic goals through and with their partner forces in low intensity conflict.

The evolution of special operations theory since WWII has supported SOF theory development in many constructive ways. These include a thorough understanding about the combination of qualities that comprise successful SOF practitioners, and means of selecting for those combinations and others; the identification of principles through which SOF are able to accomplish high-risk missions at an asymmetric disadvantage, in both surgical strike and special

warfare operations; and an appreciation for, but incomplete understanding of, the unique relationship between a nation's special operations assets and the government and people, both in war and peace. However, the discourse in search of a grand unified theory of SOF has generated a large volume of qualitative characteristics, attributes, and principles supposedly unique to SOF in their combination that the body of theory in total cannot do what theory is meant to do: make clear that which is not clear. Perhaps, as Colin Gray suggested, special operations encompass such a diversity of actions that they be distilled as a whole into a handful of universal concepts which apply to all of them. A more useful pursuit for theorists in the current era of engagement may be in narrowly scoped theories about specific missions and environments as they relate to SOF.

The second supporting question considers the tactical question of partner force selection and quality. R3 doctrine is a most beneficial tool for effective and efficient pursuit of strategic goals through partner force action. But selecting the right partner in the right location with the right capability or potential is often contingent on factors beyond SOF control or influence. SOF prefer to develop partner SOF units to augment a partner nation's high-end counterterrorism capacity, as this training relationship is considered to pay the highest return on investment.[154] But most nations require a high level of competence and institutionalization in their conventional forces before they are ready or need to develop standing specialized units. Without such a foundation in the partner military, the new SOF capacity is short lived, because there is no force generation mechanism to sustain it, or it becomes misused, as the partner government employs SOF to do CF tasks because the CF cannot.

Conversely, a key concern for US SOF is their employment in environments where they find themselves training low-skilled conventional units of a weakly institutionalized partner military. The prospects for the success of such a force may in fact be good, depending on its

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[154] Author interview with former Security Cooperation Planner at Special Operations Command, Pacific (SOCPAC), February 10, 2015.

motivation and the relative capability of the threat. SOF have in fact achieved considerable tactical and strategic effects through and with partners that did not have a high degree of capability relative to the threat or comparable regional forces. Consider the indigenous militias raised by Special Forces during the Vietnam War or their campaigning with the Northern Alliance. But most such examples are typically focused on irregular or paramilitary partner forces and oriented on discrete, near-term objectives with clear termination criteria in mind. Beyond the military endstate, US policy had no concern for sustainability of those partners. In phase 0 BPC campaigns, however, the near-term object of countering a specific threat is supplanted by the long-term objective of capable, competent, and confident foreign security forces.

It follows that SOF partner development alone may be insufficient to achieve the long-term goal when partner forces are at very low levels of institutionalization, as was the case in Mali and in many other important and ongoing partnerships in Africa. In such countries that are not yet ready to develop standing special operations capacities and may lack the resources or simply the developmental history to provide for a strong conventional force, the initial assessment should address what capacity gaps might be filled through CF support to the BPC mission. Thus, CF may engage in partner advising in a manner appropriate to both their skills and the partner military's needs, leaving SOF to develop and enable partner capacities in ways not within the CF skill set. If circumstances still require that SOF conduct BPC in a manner that does not meet the long-term or other anticipated requirements for stability, then there is an obligation to advise both the policy-maker and the practitioner on the limitations of the effort. This is "expectation management," and it does not indicate a lack of confidence or commitment in the mission and its outcome, but rather like the Stockdale Paradox, is a necessary recognition of environmental truths that will enable realistic planning to proceed. Good military advice from the force to the commander and policy maker is one of the critical means of preventing the misuse of SOF.

The third question seeks a more beneficial partnership between SOF and CF in phase 0. R3 practices may also be extended to build the most beneficial working relations with joint,

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whole-of-government, and unified action partners. The policy and supporting doctrine of BPC already make clear that unity of effort by multiple agencies is necessary to achieve these policy objectives. Senior military leaders, through their directives, public narrative and written guidance to the force, have likewise clarified that all service branches have a role in phase 0 partner advising. Special operations forces, in recognition of the 5th SOF truth: "most special operations require non-SOF support," already employ a number of non-SOF enablers and have made many of them organic to SOF formations.[155] Perhaps one by-product of SOF's internalization of some conventional capacity is a reduced need for interaction with the CF which previously might have supplied those enablers. SOF have clearly benefitted from the growth of enablers within SOF structures, especially those that support the collection and exploitation of intelligence. The positive effect is that this enables SOF to accomplish many of its phase 0 missions autonomously. But the impacts on SOF-CF interdependence and teambuilding in budget-constrained phase 0 operations will likely not be clear until after some years of assessment.

In *Making Things Work: Solving Complex Problems in a Complex World*, Yaneer Bar Yam describes how a transition from competition to cooperation by agents at the same level enables them to compete more successfully at higher levels of competition. He used the levels of player, team, and league or sport to show that improved cooperation, or teamwork, between players improved the team's competition at the league level, and that improving quality of teams and play across the league, a form of cooperation, improved the league or sport's competitiveness with other leagues or sports for winning fan loyalty. His bottom line is that "the interplay between competition and cooperation can only be understood by using a multilevel perspective. Competition and cooperation will tend to support each other when they occur at different levels of organization, but they will generally be in conflict if they occur at the same level."[156]

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[155] Yarger, 36.

[156] Yaneer Bar Yam, *Making Things Work: Solving Complex Problems in a Complex World* (NECSI Knowledge Press, 2004), 83.

This bears on BPC and many other government enterprises in that, while pursuing whole-of-government collaboration to achieve effects on an international scale, there is often competition within the interagency environment, for resources or for dominance over policy, that disrupts the whole-of-government intent. A similar pattern of disruption happens at the joint and service levels when internal parochialism and competition inhibits successful collaboration at a higher level. If elements with a service, like SOF and CF, do not effectively coordinate their campaigns and cannot present a unity of military effort to other unified action partners, then the cooperation at those higher levels becomes less effective, resulting in suboptimal or unsatisfactory outcomes. Essentially, whole-of-government action in support of national policy ends becomes a principal-agent problem on a grand scale.[157] Collaboration and unity of effort seem more difficult to foment under circumstances where the perceived importance of a given policy does not outweigh the internal interests of an agency or department, a service, or a subculture. To counter this prevailing tendency requires the practitioner to subordinate one's own organization to the higher-level collaborative goal. This requires awareness of the value that other units and agencies bring to the campaign, and active effort to reach out to like-minded agents within those groups.

The OEF-P case study is representative of some fundamental assertions that deserve frequent revisiting by policy makers and practitioners. The first of these, at the level of national policy and grand strategy, is that the achievement or approximation of a policy objective through military, whole-of-government, or unified action enjoys a direct relationship with the prioritization that objective receives at the highest levels of policy. This would seem to be self-evident, yet it describes one of the conclusions common to recent studies of BPC effectiveness. The correlation between US government prioritization and BPC success emerged in earnest

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[157] See Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

following 9/11.[158] However, not all BPC efforts receive the same prioritization. The second is almost as obvious – that the pursuit of those policy ends becomes highly contextualized by the specific countries, partners, and threats that the policy seeks to address. In other words, when a policy such as BPC or counterterrorism is applied in different environments, the variance of the extrinsic qualities in each place requires a modification of the policy in practice to be relevant to the environment.

What the OEF-P example shows, and is reinforced by the successes in El Salvador and Colombia, is that a relatively large-scale commitment of resources by Congress reflects the importance of the endeavor and the will of the USG to see it through. Conversely, advisory efforts employed "on the cheap" demand creativity, efficiency, and expectation management. Economy of force proved ill-suited for the training effort in Mali preceding that country's most recent rebellion and separate coup d'état. Ongoing efforts to counter the expanding web of VEOs in Africa have not yet broken into the high-priority category indicated by the legislative commitment of real money. This suggests an ongoing debate about whether Islamic extremists in Africa are a credible threat to the US, or prompts a thought exercise about the alternate futures of intervention in El Salvador and the Philippines had the US not made substantial resource commitments to those partners.

At the level of US policy, doctrine, and institutional implementation, the complex system of legislative authorities, funding sources, and proponencies are at times a hindrance to the effective execution of BPC policy and its components. A web of standing laws authorizes the implementation of multiple programs by multiple agencies. So byzantine are the oversight, relationships, and overlaps of these programs that nesting and integrating multiple efforts at country and regional levels are beyond the capacity of program managers at the embassies or campaign planners at the combatant commands. The potential for untoward effects became

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[158] Paul, et al., 88-89.

obvious in the case of Mali, where some 22 different funding streams and programs contributed to a patchwork approach that was not managed by a single entity.[159] Furthermore, specific materiel assistance to FSF and certain types of advising, most notably combat FID, must be specifically authorized in detail by Congress. The interaction between Congress, the national security establishment, and the military thus becomes a negotiation over priorities, and policy decisions become informed by many more factors than those pertinent to the military practitioner.

At the seam of strategic and operational objectives, quality of the partner force is a major pre-determinant of possible options a BPC campaign may pursue. Just as some similarities may be drawn between the partner development efforts in the Afghanistan and Vietnam wars, so too might parallels be found between past and current Phase 0 SFA campaigns. The successes of the Plan Colombia and OEF-P campaigns, though contingent on their resonance with the specific context of the environments and cultures in which they unfolded, shared many common factors. They were both high-priority in the eyes of the US government, which in turn drove congressional approval for funding initiatives and also contributed to a robust interdepartmental collaboration. The militaries of these states, while still wrestling with institutional difficulties relative to Western standards, were both well developed in terms of their size, hierarchy, and decades of combat experience against internal threats. Conventional forces were sufficiently evolved in both armies to permit the significant development of SOF. Some have suggested that the methods employed here might be transplanted into African counterterrorism environments with expectations of similar success. Yet most of those partner militaries are much younger, less developed, and poorly institutionalized relative to the militaries of Colombia and the Philippines. Though SOF BPC efforts to date with several Africa partner nations other than Mali may clearly be considered successful in relation to the threats posed by al Qaeda affiliates and the Lord's

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[159] *Mali: Building Partner Capacity and Countering AQIM: A Case Study,* The Joint Staff, Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis report, February 22, 2013, 19.

Resistance Army, none of these militaries are prepared to develop a standing special operations capacity.

Several succinct assertions have emerged at the operational-tactical seam. These include:

- SOF cannot focus on BPC at the tactical level, but must also develop partner capacities at operational command and ministerial levels to ensure best employment of the partner force. This is even more critical if the partner force is itself a SOF.

- SOF require CF enablers to more fully develop partner force potential.

- SOF are able to focus on developing partner SOF if either the partner conventional force is capable, or US CF are conducting concurrent BPC with partner CF. This has been validated in war. It has not been satisfactorily validated in phase 0.

- SOF BPC campaigns must integrate termination criteria based on the progress of the partner force and/or the mitigation of the threat. Termination of a BPC campaign need not mean termination of the partnership, because…

- In phase 0, threat-oriented BPC, there can be no military end-state, no condition in which some representation of US armed force is no longer needed. This is demonstrated by the transition from large-scale advisory missions like JSOTF-P to smaller mission which maintain relationships and ensure continuity of partner capability.

- Similarly, threat-oriented BPC should be considered a form of indirect warfare, and should be treated like a long war for campaigning purposes. This is a delicate approach, as the idea of phase 0 warfare does not resonate well with most whole-of-government partners.

SOF Boundary Spanners and Collaborative Interdependence

In 2013, the publication of *ARSOF 2022* delivered the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Commander's guidance, vision, and priorities through an

operating concept to set ARSOF's course for the next decade.[160] The second of its six priorities

describes the challenge of optimizing SOF integration with conventional forces and unified action

partners. This concept of SOF-CF interdependence is of great importance to the ARSOF

community and to senior Army leaders. Prior to OEF and OIF, this concept was little discussed or

tested in training, but the value of the relationship has been proven in more than a decade of

combat, and both parties seek ways to sustain and institutionalize it before it is lost in the postwar

scramble for meager resources and parochial missions.

ARSOF 2022 envisions several ways to foment this unity of purpose, especially in

training environments or via institutional-level cross-pollination. Proposed solutions call for

USASOC to embed more fully into professional military education and disseminate SOF doctrine

throughout the force; to generate programs that offer CF relevant training in historically SOF-

dominated areas of expertise, such as education in military assistance and advising and support to

governance; and to build mechanisms with the Army's premier training venue for division and

higher staffs, the Mission Command Training Program (MCTP), to support the training of

operational-level SOF staffs.[161] The command has already implemented a pairing of Special

Forces companies with Brigade Combat Teams for Combat Training Center rotations.[162]

This interconnectivity with CF (and other entities whose support have an augmenting

effect on SOF operations) may not meet with equal and bilateral efforts. Historical continuities

strongly suggest, and recent commentary confirms, that conventional forces hold a limited

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[160] *Special Warfare*, volume 26 issue 2, April – June 2013. Fort Bragg, NC: US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, 2013.

[161] Ibid., 20.

[162] See Michael R. Fenzel and Joseph G. Lock, "A Strategy for Future Victory: Institutionalizing SOF-CF Interdependence," *Infantry*, October 2014-March 2015.

interest in phase 0 "warfare," preferring instead to prepare for the next conventional fight.[163] Yet

the phase 0 BPC role for the military presents a significant venue in which to validate the concept

of SOF-CF interoperability.

In the GWOT-era, SOF have internalized the practice of initiating liaisons and reaching

out to external organizations via "boundary spanners". Boundary spanners are individuals who

are effective at connecting an organization with external stakeholders. In practice this means that

SOF practitioners ought to appreciate their role, perhaps even obligation, to advocate for

collaboration with their non-SOF partners where it serves the greater mission, even if only to

maintain relationships. Where CF are able to support or complement SOF BPC efforts, or if the

supporting relationship is best structured in the other direction, campaigns should integrate all

available and beneficial US capabilities. This is a function of the flexibility and adaptability that

are defining characteristics of SOF.[164]

Recommendations

Within the realm of things SOF may directly influence, SOF campaigns have already

implemented key changes in recent years that build on components of the Colombia and OEF-P

models for effective partner development. These changes include a shift away from episodic

contact and toward enduring engagement; the emphasis on R3 partner alignment; and expansion

of advise and assist roles at operational and ministerial levels in partner militaries. These

practices need to continue, grow, and respond as threats and resources permit, which implies a

frequent reassessment of priority countries and partners.

SOF may improve their influence and legitimacy within the set of security cooperation

stakeholders and missions by sending SOF practitioners to receive education specific to security

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[163] "Counterinsurgency and the Future of Afghanistan," debate between Colonel Gian Gentile and Lieutenant Colonel/Dr. John Nagl at Grinell College, April 22, 2013, accessed on March 14, 2015 at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8Usfn99RjQ&feature=youtu.be.

[164] Yarger, 18; *ARSOF Next: A Return to First Principles*, *Special Warfare* Special Edition, April, 2015, 27.

cooperation and other BPC activities, allow them to support the Foreign Area Officer program without leaving SOF branches, and by making SOF planners available for duty at GCC levels.

Over time, these efforts may enable SOF to institutionalize a better understanding of operational and strategic campaign planning demands at theater and above. This will also further strengthen the relationship and mutual understanding between CF and SOF.

At the military level of teamwork are the relationships and mechanisms which SOF and CF both require in the pursuit of mission and policy goals. In accordance with the theory of teamwork and cooperation advanced by Bar-Yam, the US military's chief goal for BPC should be unity of military effort at the theater level and below. This may be achieved through two mechanisms. First, a standing security cooperation coordination group within the Plans Directorate of a Geographic Combatant Command may be given responsibility for unifying and integrating, vertically and horizontally, all SC operations, actions, activities, and assets, to include regionally aligned forces, and for connecting the military campaign with the intent and actions of the Department of State and other agencies, linking the security component of BPC and integrating it with development and governance efforts. This achieves unity of intent and effort in campaign planning.

Second, the execution of these campaigns may be delegated to a joint task force or other capable command subordinate to the GCC that will exercise tactical control (TACON) or operational control (OPCON) over the forces assigned to conduct BPC missions. This achieves unity of command in campaigning. The model and structure employed must reflect the context of the theater or region. In some cases, SOF may be best suited to command the execution of an integrated SC campaign, while in others, SOF may be a supporting effort to CF. Either way, an effective campaign deserves the full integration of all SC actions.

Necessary institutional and doctrinal improvements are also within the US military's purview. Doctrine and directives already recognized the equivalence of stability and irregular warfare with more "conventional" tasks and fights. Changing mindsets and CF sense-making on

those topics may never fully occur – there is still resistance, despite the US military's intersection

with those environments throughout its history. What can be more easily changed is the broad

array of overlapping missions and programs that contribute to confusion and disunity of effort.

Colonel Maxwell may be correct in his belief that FID or a future Counter-UW doctrine is

capable of enveloping all US military efforts under BPC. That these terms are heavily associated

with SOF may prevent their wide acceptance by CF, and that they are associated with warfare

may prevent their appreciation by other departments. A single body of thought, doctrine and

practice for Partner Force Development is needed to collate all military responsibilities under

BPC policy.

Things Left Unsaid

Interagency collaboration is largely excluded from this monograph for the reasons that,

on one hand, it is understood to be absolutely vital to the success of any security assistance,

stability, or BPC effort, and on the other, it is understood to be chronically hamstrung by the

inertia of our collective organizational culture and parochialism. Both aspects have been popular

essay topics in recent decades, with hundreds of good ideas offered about how to create better

whole-of-government teams and processes in order to achieve the sort of integration that policy

and doctrine necessitate.[165] This monograph can only agree that security, economic development,

and good governance must progress concurrently rather than independently; that the pertinent

agencies advancing US policy along these lines of effort ought to agree at each level on the

desired ends and mostly agree on the ways to get there; and that the success of any interagency

process touching on BPC is largely dependent on the personalities of key actors and the

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[165] See for example Rickey L. Rife, "Defense Is from Mars, State Is from Venus: Improving Communications and Promoting National Security," Strategy Research Project, Army War College, 1998.

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willingness of some to be boundary spanners who will depart from parochial competition in the interest of the greater policy.[166]

Another point of concern, and one that has not received much scholarly attention, is the responsibility of the US to model and foster a healthy respect in our partner forces for civilian control of the military instrument of national power. This is an important component in demonstrating the legitimacy of democratic governance. In weak and failing states, which are among the majority of SOF BPC recipients, the civil-military relationship may not always be grounded in rule of law and subservience of force to civil control. In such environments, BPC campaigns aimed host nation forces may indirectly provide the host government a more powerful instrument of internal coercion. BPC efforts under these circumstances must coincide with interagency approaches to developing good governance in the partner nation, especially in the name of expanding democracy. But many of these nations are not yet developed to the point where they are stable enough to withstand the introduction of democracy.[167]

Little discussion has been offered on the risks involved in creating strong military capabilities or relatively strong military capabilities and relatively weak state governments. Through military BPC the US is potentially providing a partner government a strong instrument of internal coercion, while at the same time the overarching US policy advocates for the dissemination of Western or liberal democratic practice. These two seem to be in direct conflict with each other, and again highlight the vital importance of an integrated effort among the various instruments of national power in conducting BPC.

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[166] Laurie K. Lewis, *Organizational Change: Creating Change through Strategic Communication* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 96.

[167] See Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, and Collier, *Wars, Guns, and Votes*.

In Closing

US national security policy clearly states that countering the global terrorist network which threatens US and allied interests requires in part an indirect approach through and with the military capacity of our partner nations. Threat groups based in weak and failed states uniformly exploit the undergoverned spaces where US partner nations lack the capacity to deny those spaces to the terrorist or insurgent. US security policy ends therefore include both defeating the terrorist network and supporting partner nation stability. The policy of building partner capacity is the way to achieve those ends, through whole-of-government actions to improve the security, development, and governance abilities of the partner nation. All services of the US military are tasked with preparing for and conducting stability operations, including the partner force development aspects of BPC.

US SOF have demonstrated that under a range of conditions, they are an optimal means for developing competent partner forces. There are also environments in which SOF partner advising may only achieve limited results due to extrinsic factors. Whether the conditions be poor or ideal, it is the responsibility of SOF planners and practitioners to design, resource, and execute campaigns, both autonomously and in combination with conventional forces, which link and sequence tactical advisory efforts to enable successful partner operations which contribute to US strategic and policy ends. Putting this into practice will enable the evolution of special warfare theory and partner advising doctrine, and will continue to define the strategic utility of special operations.

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